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(54) INTERACTIVE DISCOVERY OF DISPLAY DEVICE CHARACTERISTICS

(76) Inventors: **Arturo A. Rodriguez**, Norcross, GA (US); **Robert O. Banker**, Cumming, GA (US); **Darryl S. Delacruz**, San Jose, CA (US); **David B. Lett**, Duluth, GA (US); **Ajith N. Nair**, Lawrenceville, GA (US); **James W. Kiker**, Duluth, GA (US)

Correspondence Address:
SCIENTIFIC-ATLANTA, INC.
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DEPARTMENT
5030 SUGARLOAF PARKWAY
LAWRENCEVILLE, GA 30044 (US)

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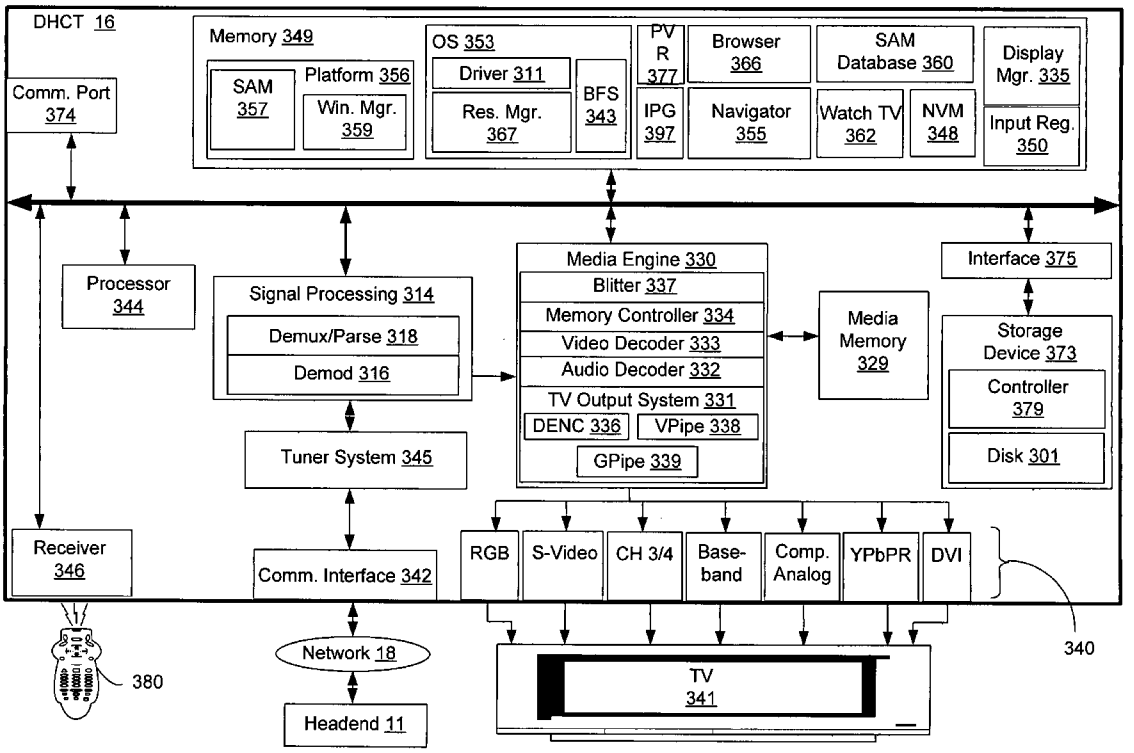
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(57) ABSTRACT

A system and method for determining the characteristics of a device coupled to a client device are disclosed. A method, according to one embodiment, includes driving a display device with a first video output signal formatted according to a first video interface specification; responsive to driving the display device, soliciting user input based on information included in the first video output signal; determining a characteristic of the display device based on the user input; and driving the display device according to the determined characteristic.



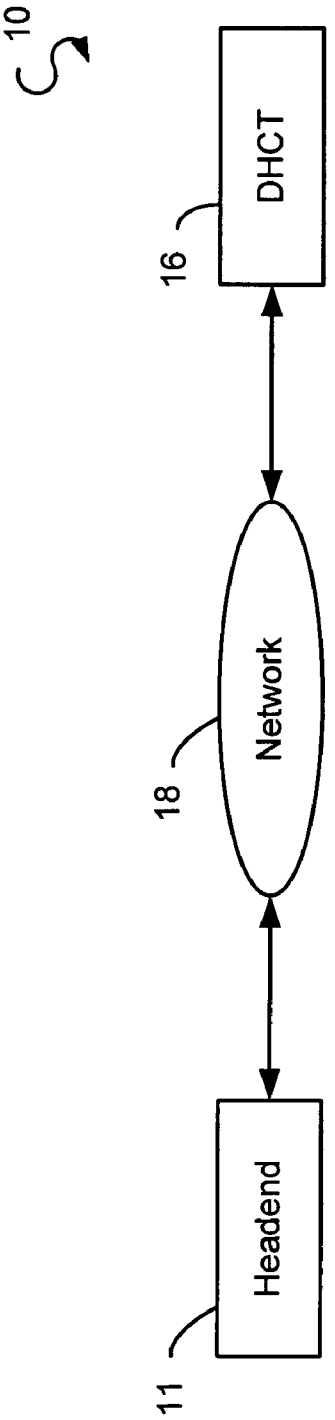


FIG. 1

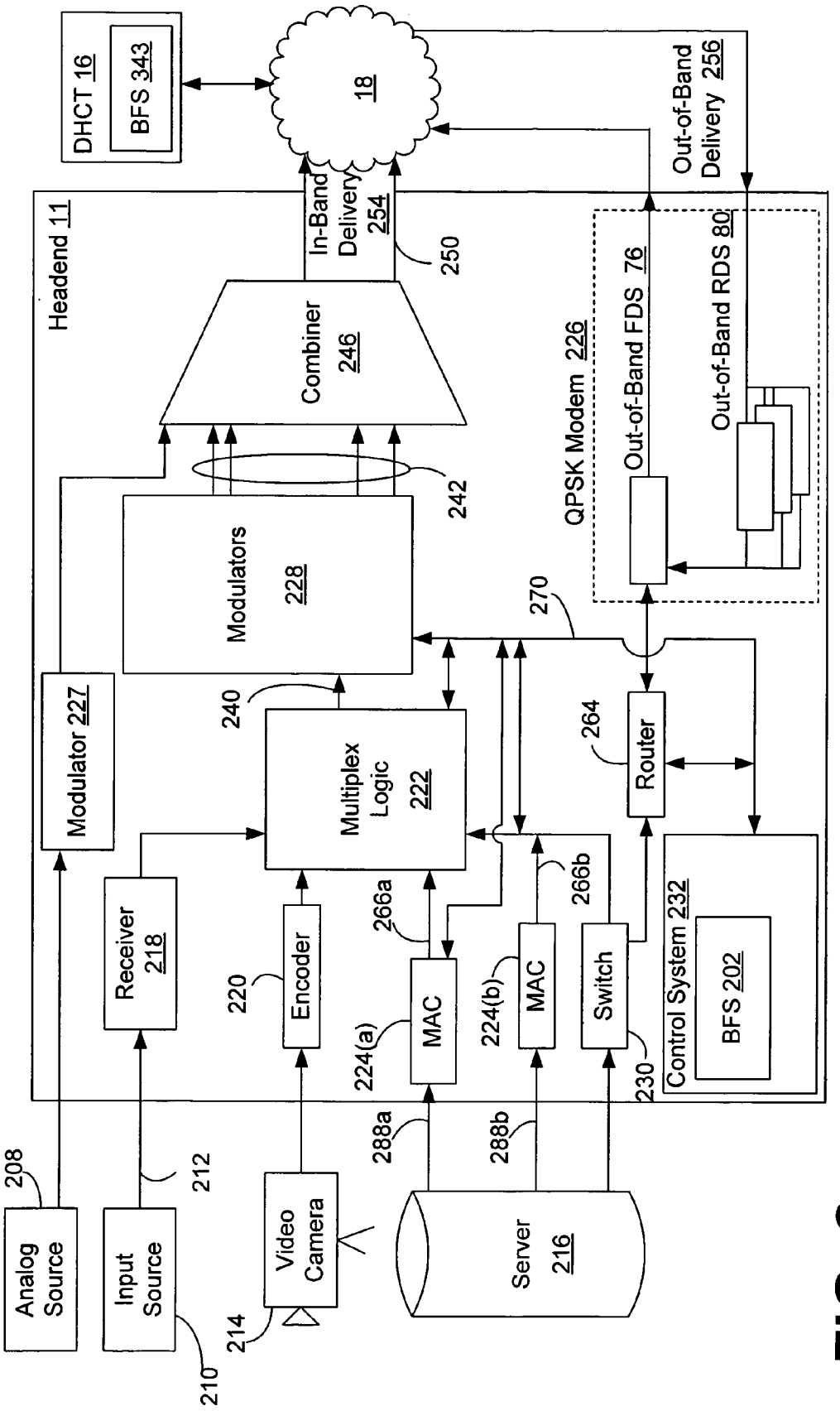

DHCT 16
BFS 343
18
Out-of-Band Delivery 256
Headend 11
In-Band Delivery 254
250
Combiner 246
242
Modulators 228
QPSK Modem 226
Out-of-Band FDS 76
Out-of-Band RDS 80
270
Modulator 227
240
Multiplex Logic 222
264
Router
Receiver 218
220
Encoder
266a
266b
224(a)
MAC
224(b)
MAC
Switch
230
Control System 232
BFS 202
288a
288b
208
212
Analog Source
Input Source
Video Camera
214
210
Server 216

FIG. 2

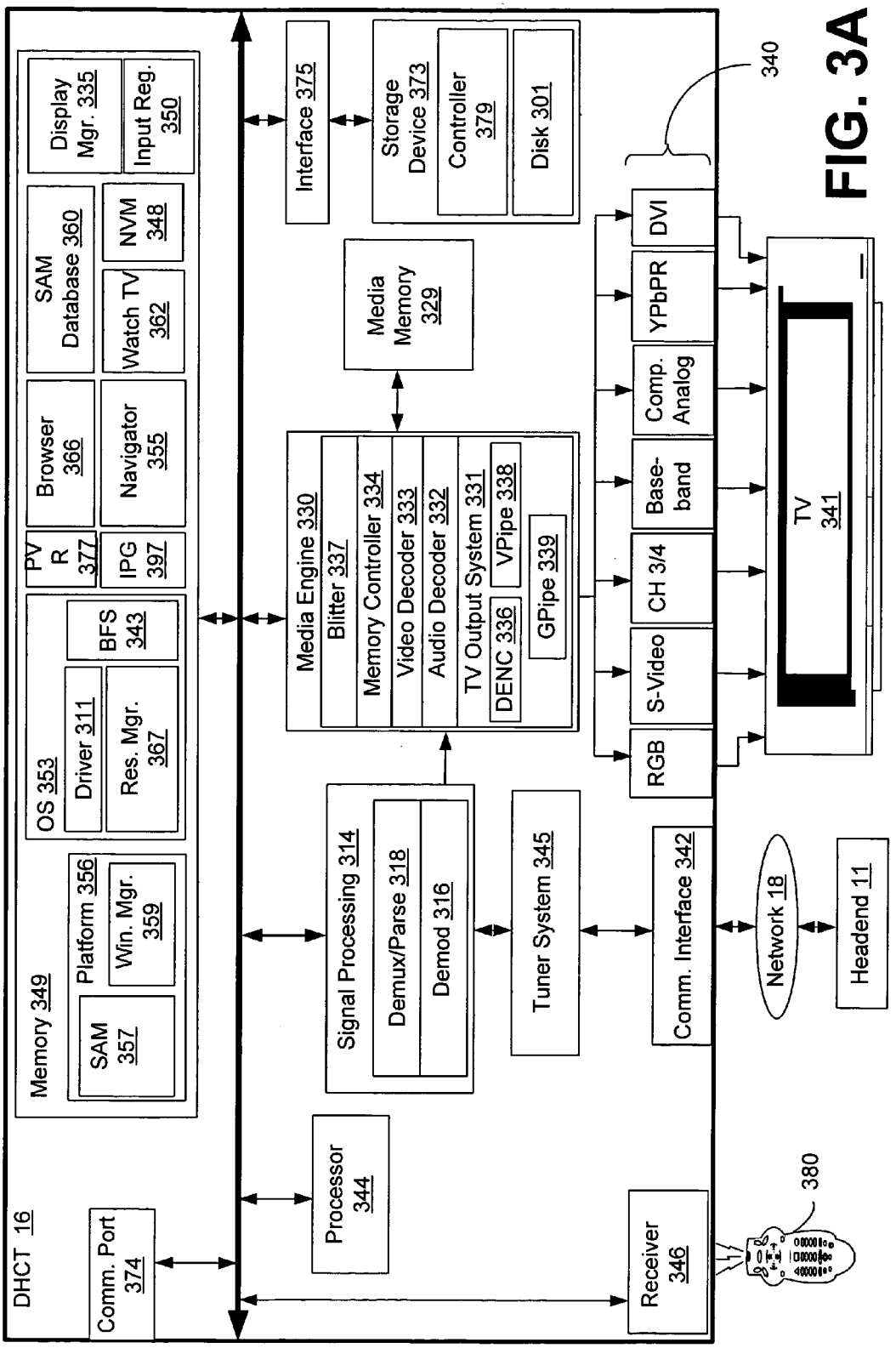
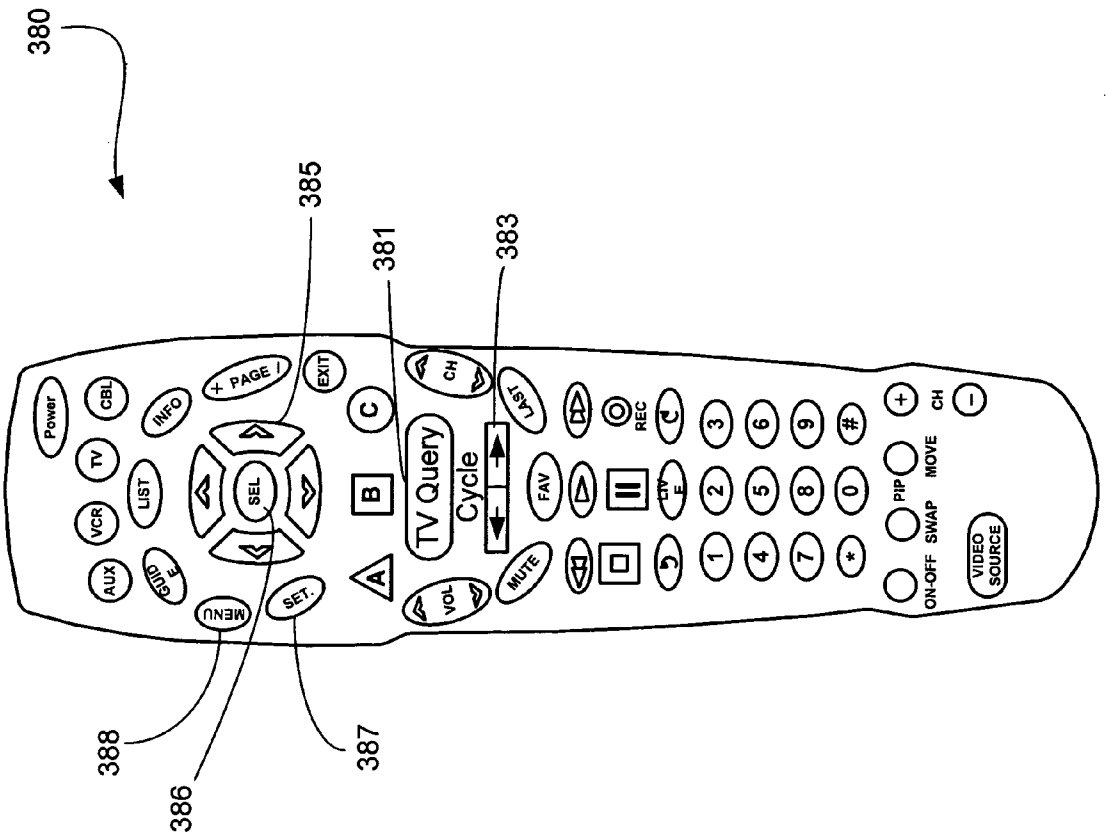

DHCT 16
Comm. Port 374
Processor 344
Receiver 346
380
Memory 349
SAM 357
Platform 356
Win. Mgr. 359
OS 353
Driver 311
Res. Mgr. 367
BFS 343
PV R 377
IPG 397
Browser 366
Navigator 355
SAM Database 360
Watch TV 362
NVM 348
Display Mgr. 335
Input Reg. 350
Signal Processing 314
Demux/Parse 318
Demod 316
Tuner System 345
Comm. Interface 342
Network 18
Headend 11
Media Engine 330
Blitter 337
Memory Controller 334
Video Decoder 333
Audio Decoder 332
TV Output System 331
DENC 336
VPipe 338
GPipe 339
Media Memory 329
Interface 375
Storage Device 373
Controller 379
Disk 301
340
RGB
S-Video
CH 3/4
Base-band
Comp. Analog
YPbPR
DVI
TV 341

FIG. 3A

FIG. 3B


380
385
381
383
388
386
387
Power
CBL
INFO
+ PAGE -
EXIT
TV
LIST
VCR
AUX
GUIDE
MENU
SET
SEL
A
B
C
TV Query
Cycle
CH
LAST
VOL
MUTE
FAV
REC
CITY
PIP
MOVE
SWAP
ON-OFF
VIDEO SOURCE
CH

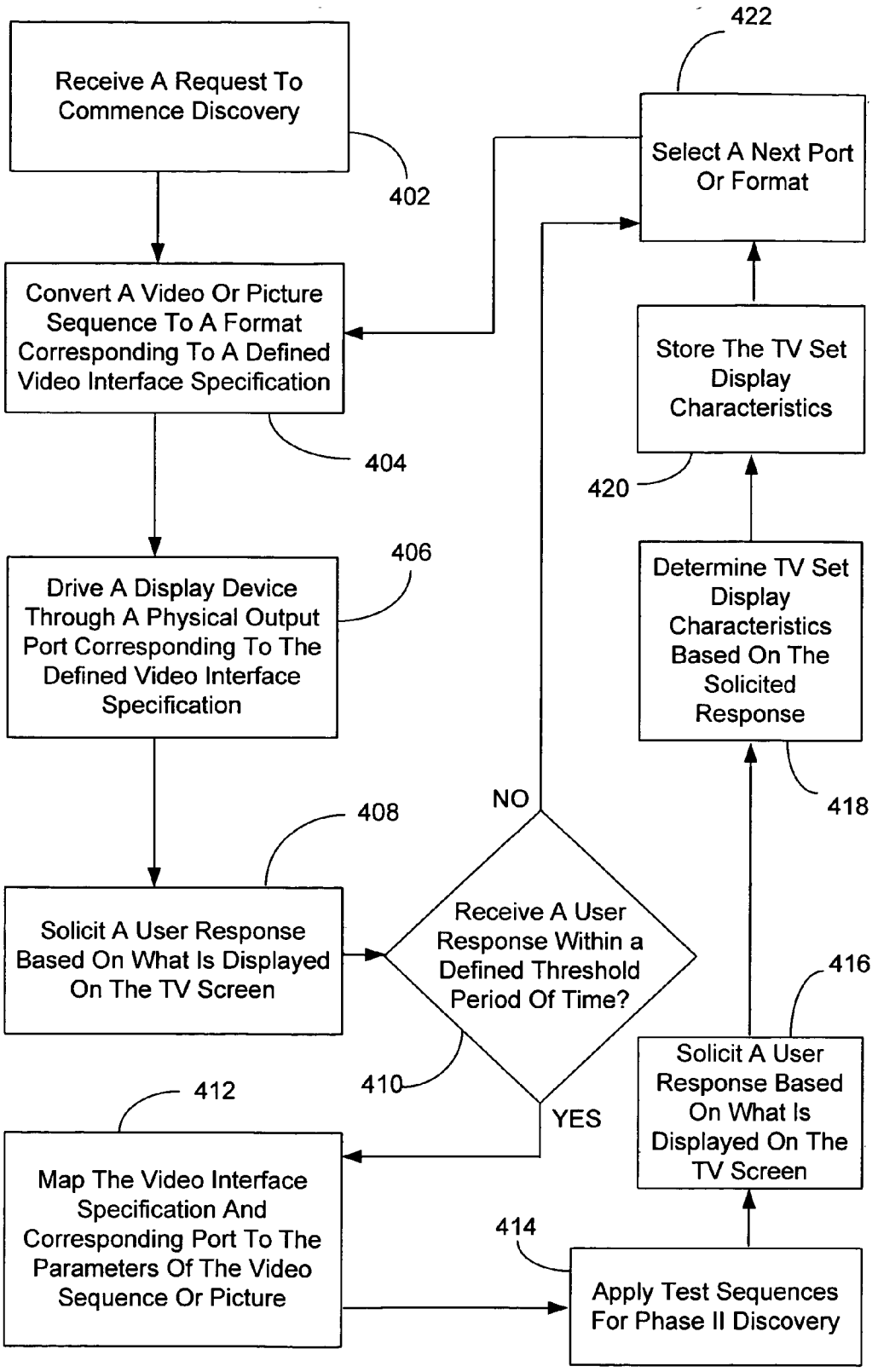

Receive A Request To Commence Discovery
402
Convert A Video Or Picture Sequence To A Format Corresponding To A Defined Video Interface Specification
404
Drive A Display Device Through A Physical Output Port Corresponding To The Defined Video Interface Specification
406
Solicit A User Response Based On What Is Displayed On The TV Screen
408
Receive A User Response Within a Defined Threshold Period Of Time?
410
NO
YES
Map The Video Interface Specification And Corresponding Port To The Parameters Of The Video Sequence Or Picture
412
Apply Test Sequences For Phase II Discovery
414
Solicit A User Response Based On What Is Displayed On The TV Screen
416
Determine TV Set Display Characteristics Based On The Solicited Response
418
Store The TV Set Display Characteristics
420
Select A Next Port Or Format
422

FIG. 4

FIG. 5

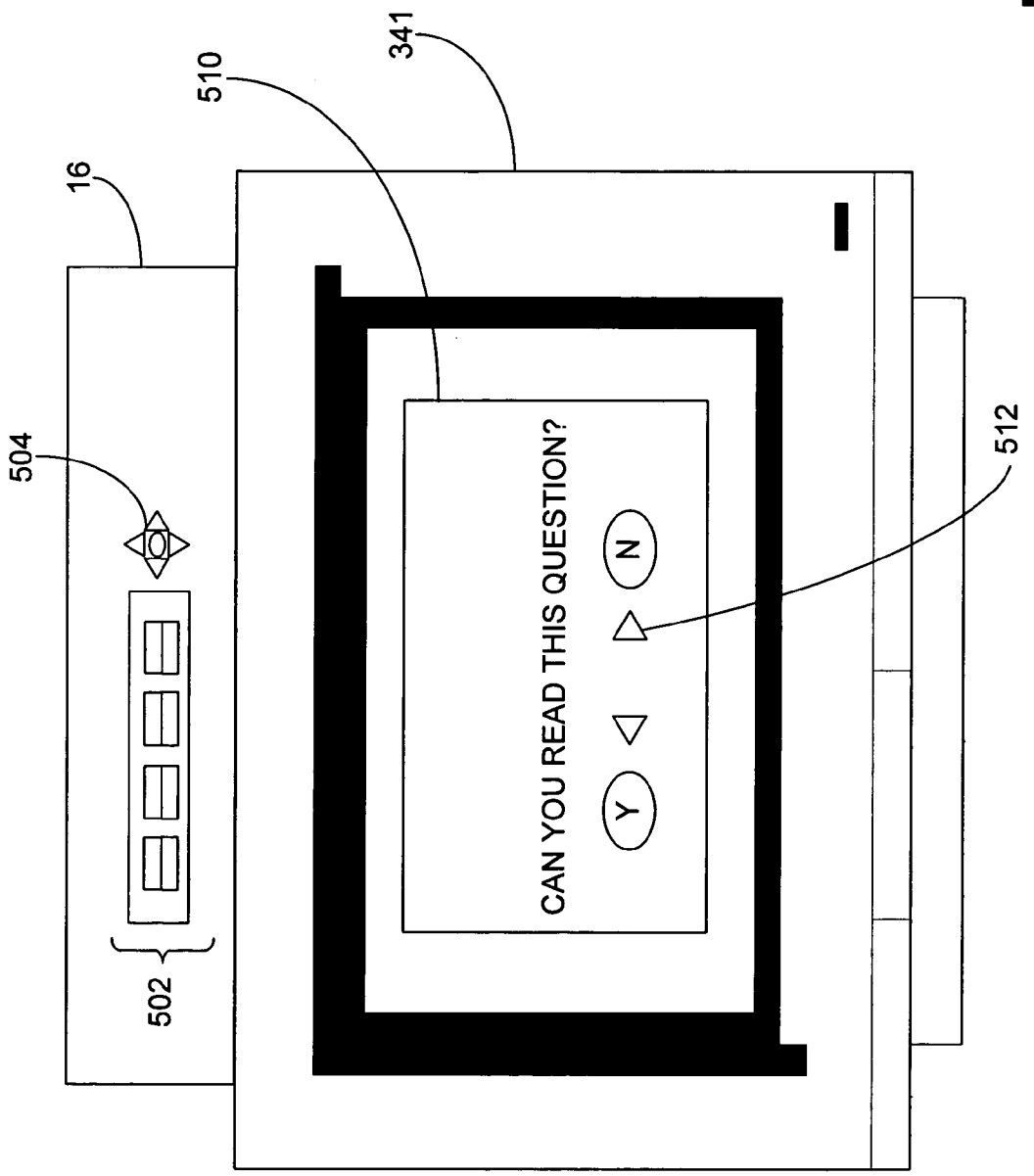


FIG. 6

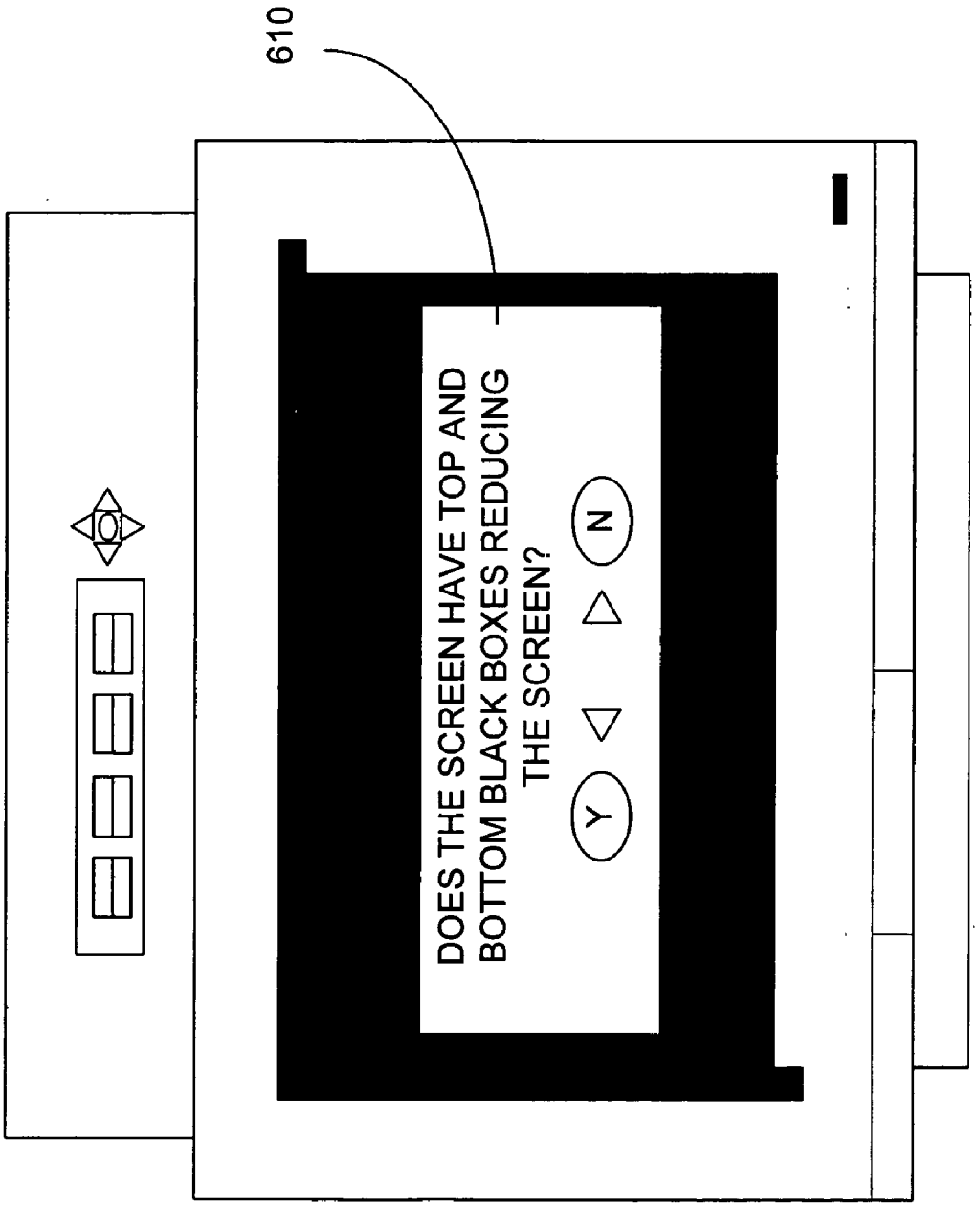
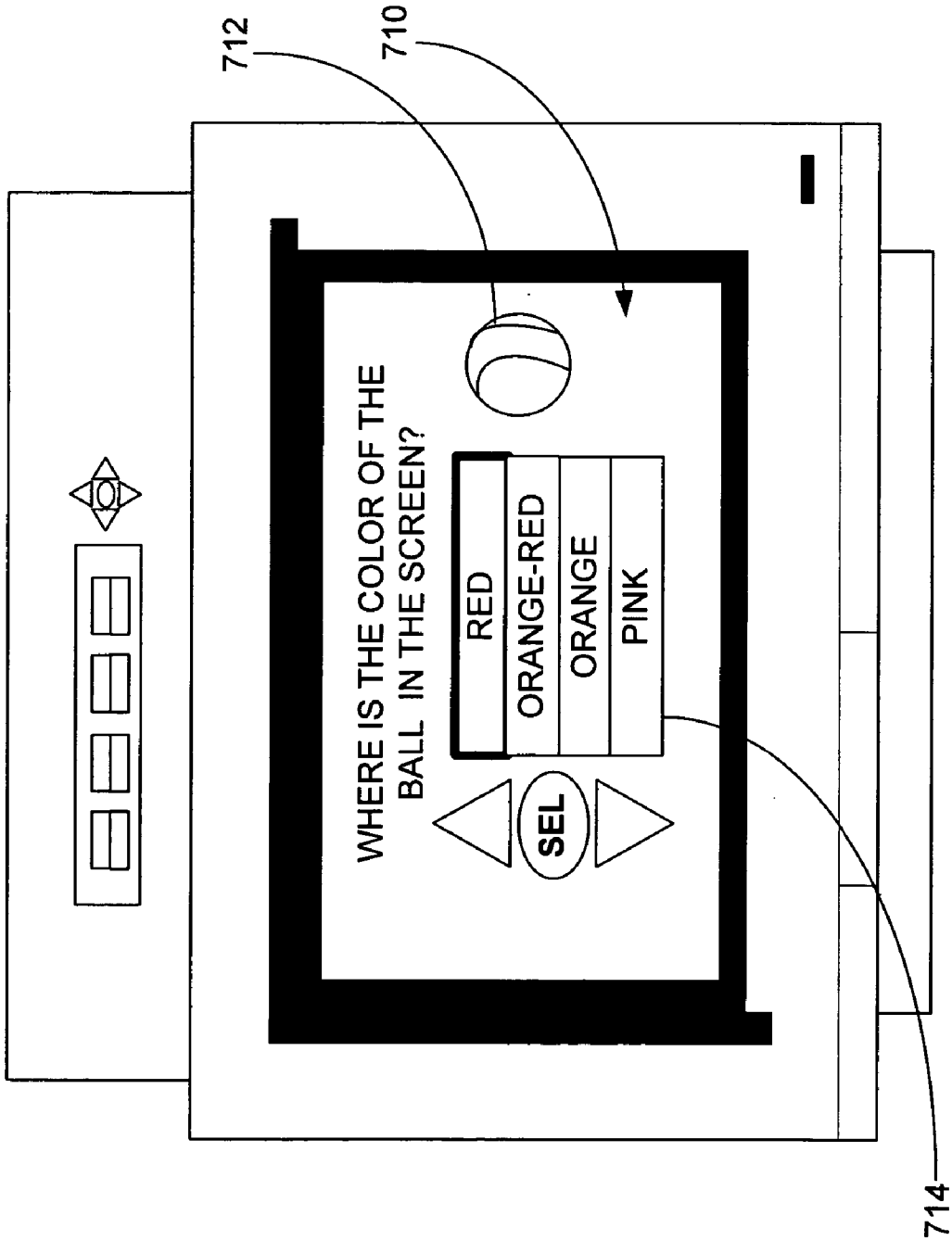

610
DOES THE SCREEN HAVE TOP AND BOTTOM BLACK BOXES REDUCING THE SCREEN?
Y
N

FIG. 7


712
710
WHERE IS THE COLOR OF THE BALL IN THE SCREEN?
RED
ORANGE-RED
ORANGE
PINK
SEL
714

INTERACTIVE DISCOVERY OF DISPLAY DEVICE CHARACTERISTICS

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0001] This disclosure relates in general to the field of television systems, and more particularly, to the field of interactive television.

BACKGROUND OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0002] With recent advances in digital transmission technology, subscriber television systems are now capable of providing much more than the traditional analog broadcast video. In implementing enhanced programming, the home communication terminal ("HCT"), otherwise known as the set-top box, has become an important computing device for accessing content services (and content within those services) and navigating a user through a maze of available services. In addition to supporting traditional analog broadcast video functionality, digital HCTs (or "DHCTs") now also support an increasing number of two-way digital services such as video-on-demand and personal video recording.

[0003] Typically, a DHCT is connected to a cable or satellite, or generally, a subscriber television system, and includes hardware and software necessary to provide the functionality of the digital television system at the user's site. Some of the software executed by a DHCT can be downloaded and/or updated via the subscriber television system. Each DHCT also typically includes a processor, input/output capabilities, communication components, and memory, and is connected to a television set or other display device, such as a personal computer. While many conventional DHCTs are stand-alone devices that are externally connected to a television, a DHCT and/or its functionality may be integrated into a television or personal computer or even an audio device such as a programmable radio, as will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art.

[0004] Technological advances now permit generation and transmission of a variety of higher resolution pictures and video formats. Coincident with the advancing technology of transmission equipment is the technological improvements of the DHCTs and the television set to receive and display a plurality of video formats. There are a wide range of television sets available today, including the conventional cathode ray tube (CRT) styles, overhead projection, rear projection, liquid crystal display based technology, and plasma television sets that can be mounted on a wall. These variations in television sets often lead to a wide variety of characteristics that affect processing of a television picture for display. A sourced television or video signal is typically processed for display by considering its characteristics, as well as the TV set's characteristics such as the size of the screen, the aspect ratio of the display, and whether the display implements an interlaced or progressive scan format, among other characteristics. Due to the increasing complexity and variation of DHCTs and television sets (and thus a multitude of characteristics to consider in processing a video signal), connecting a television set to, or otherwise communicating with, a DHCT and achieving a viewable picture and a desired display quality is often a challenge to even the most technologically adept. Thus a need exists in the industry to address the aforementioned and/or other deficiencies and/or inadequacies.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0005] The disclosure can be better understood with reference to the following drawings. The components in the drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon clearly illustrating the principles of the present disclosure. Moreover, in the drawings, like reference numerals designate corresponding parts throughout the several views.

[0006] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram depicting an example subscriber television system (STS), in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure.

[0007] **FIG. 2** is a block diagram depicting an example headend shown in the STS of **FIG. 1**, in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure.

[0008] **FIG. 3A** is a block diagram depicting an example digital home communication terminal (DHCT) shown in the STS of **FIG. 1**, which is coupled to the example headend of **FIG. 2** and a television, in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure.

[0009] **FIG. 3B** is a schematic diagram of the example remote control device shown in **FIG. 3A**, in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure.

[0010] **FIG. 4** is a flow diagram depicting an example method for determining display device characteristics, in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure.

[0011] **FIGS. 5-7** are block diagrams of the example DHCT and the television set shown in **FIG. 3A** with a display screen that solicits user feedback based on a plurality of output formats from the DHCT to the TV set, in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0012] The preferred embodiments of the disclosure now will be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings. The preferred embodiments of the disclosure include systems and methods that provide an interactive session with a user to determine the characteristics of a television set or other display device coupled to a digital home communication terminal (DHCT).

[0013] Video formats can vary in picture size, frame rate, and on whether pictures are progressive or interlaced. A progressive picture constitutes all the lines of a frame whereas an interlaced picture has a top field and bottom field of alternating lines to constitute a complete frame. An interlaced picture is displayed during respective field intervals. Video formats can further vary in other attributes or characteristics such as color format, color primaries, picture width-to-height aspect ratio, and width-to-height aspect ratio of the individual picture elements, or pixels, that make-up the picture.

[0014] As a non-limiting example, the video formats of a compressed digital television signal processed in a DHCT for display include formats specified by ATSC (Advanced Television Systems Committee) Digital Television Standard A/54 and include the characteristics described above. An analog television signal such as a NTSC (National Television System Committee) television signal can be processed for display as well.

[0015] As there are multiple video formats for a sourced television signal, there are also multiple physical output interfaces or connectors (or similarly, ports) in the DHCT from which a DHCT-processed television signal can be output. The processed signal that is output through a physical output interface complies with the format specification of that interface. An interface specification, such as a video interface specification, can also include mechanisms for providing ancillary data. For example, the provision of close-caption text within a video signal may be part of the video interface specification.

[0016] In addition to possible differences in signaling and physical characteristics, video interface specifications can differ in one or more parameters that pertains to the characteristics of the video picture. For instance, parameters that can differ in value in distinct video interface specifications include picture size, frame rate, whether pictures are progressive or interlaced, color format, colorimetry, picture width-to-height aspect ratio, width-to-height aspect ratio of pixels, and if and how ancillary data is provided.

[0017] A video interface specification can allow for one or more picture parameters to take different values. For instance, the value of a colorimetry parameter may differ according to the video picture's colorimetry. Furthermore, a video interface specification can support multiple sets of a combination of parameter values that specify the characteristics of the picture. The parameters that can take different values in the multiple sets of a combination of parameters correspond to characteristics that may include picture size, frame rate, whether pictures are progressive or interlaced, color format, colorimetry, picture width-to-height aspect ratio, width-to-height aspect ratio of pixels, and if and where ancillary data is carried. For instance, the SMPTE (Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers) **274** specification supports multiple input and output picture formats, such as 1920×1080 interlaced or progressive pictures, one of various frame rates, and RGB or YPbPr encoded pixels. SMPTE **296** specifies 1280×720 progressive pictures for input and output.

[0018] A physical output interface or connector can further serve to output video signals corresponding to one or more video format specifications. For instance, the physical connector trio used to output component analog video as YPbPr could be configured to output a television signal as an RGB component analog video signal. As another non-limiting example, a physical output interface can be used to output a television signal compliant to SMPTE **274** or SMPTE **296**.

[0019] It would be understood by those having ordinary skill in the art that other specifications and/or standards can be used that will include the same, fewer, more, or different parameters and yet be considered within the scope of the preferred embodiments of the disclosure. Consequently, a DHCT configured in accordance with the preferred embodiments determines the video formats supported by the television set or other display device connected to the DHCT. Responsive to these determinations, the DHCT can then set its video output format, resolution of graphics overlays, and closed caption support accordingly and process sourced television signals accordingly.

[0020] The systems and methods of the preferred embodiments of the disclosure will be described in the context of a subscriber television system, and particularly, a DHCT that is connected to a TV set, although other systems that include communication with an interactive display are considered to be within the scope of the disclosure. Additionally, reference herein will be made to physical output ports with the understanding that physical output ports include ports, connectors, and physical interfaces, including wireless interfaces. Since the preferred embodiments of the disclosure can be understood in the context of a subscriber television system, one such example system is described below, with further description of the DHCT and headend components. Following the description of these components is an example method of the preferred embodiments of the disclosure, followed by some illustrations of some example interactive sessions of a discovery procedure that can be used to determine the display device characteristics to enable a quality picture to be displayed.

[0021] The disclosure may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the disclosure to those of ordinary skill in the art. Furthermore, all "examples" given herein are intended to be non-limiting and among others not shown but understood to be within the scope of the disclosure.

I. Subscriber Television System

[0022] **FIG. 1** is a block diagram depicting an example subscriber television system (STS) **10**, in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure. In this example, the STS **10** includes a headend **11** and a digital home communication terminal (DHCT) **16** that are coupled via a communications network **18**. It will be understood that the STS **10** shown in **FIG. 1** is merely illustrative and should not be construed as implying any limitations upon the scope of the preferred embodiments of the disclosure. For example, although single components (e.g., a headend **11** and a DHCT **16**) are illustrated in **FIG. 1**, the STS **10** can feature a plurality of any one of the illustrated components, or may be configured with alternative embodiments for any one of the individual components or with yet other additional components not enumerated above. Subscriber television systems also included within the scope of the preferred embodiments of the disclosure include systems not utilizing physical structured cabling for transmission, such as, but not limited to, satellite systems and terrestrial-broadcast systems.

[0023] The DHCT **16** is typically situated at the residence or place of business or recreation of a user and may be a stand-alone unit or integrated into a television set, a personal computer, or other display devices, or an audio device, among other media devices. The DHCT **16** receives content (video, audio and/or other data) from the headend **11** through the network **18** and in some embodiments, provides reverse information to the headend **11** through the network **18**.

[0024] The headend **11** receives content from one or more content providers (not shown), including local providers. The content is processed and/or stored and then transmitted to client devices such as the DHCT **16** via the network **18**. The headend **11** may include one or more server devices (not shown) for providing content to the DHCT **16**. The headend **11** and the DHCT **16** cooperate to provide a user with television services via a television set (not shown). The

television services may include, for example, broadcast television services, cable television services, premium television services, video-on-demand (VOD) services, and/or pay-per-view (PPV) services, among others.

II. Headend

[0025] **FIG. 2** is an overview of one example headend **11**, which provides the interface between the STS **10** (**FIG. 1**) and the service and content providers. The overview of **FIG. 2** is equally applicable to a hub (not shown), and the same elements and principles may be implemented at a hub instead of the headend **11**. It will be understood that the headend **11** shown in **FIG. 2** is merely illustrative and should not be construed as implying any limitations upon the scope of the preferred embodiments of the disclosure. The headend **11** receives content from a variety of service and content providers, which can provide input in a variety of ways. The headend **11** combines the content from the various sources and distributes the content to subscribers via the distribution systems of the network **18**.

[0026] In a typical system, the programming, services and other information from content providers can be distributed according to a variety of mechanisms. The input signals may be transmitted from sources to the headend **11** via a variety of transmission paths, including satellites (not shown) and terrestrial broadcast transmitters and antennas (not shown). The headend **11** can also receive content from a direct feed source **210** via a direct line **212**. Other input sources from content providers include a video camera **214**, an analog input source **208**, and/or an application server **216**. The application server **216** may include more than one line of communication. One or more components such as the analog input source **208**, the direct feed source **210**, the video camera **214**, and the application server **216** can be located external to the headend **11**, as shown, or internal to the headend **11** as would be appreciated by one having ordinary skill in the art. The signals provided by the content or programming input sources can include a single content instance (e.g., a program episode or show) or a multiplex that includes several content instances.

[0027] The headend **11** generally includes one or more receivers **218** that are each associated with a content source. MPEG (Motion Picture Experts Group) encoders, such as encoder **220**, are included for digitally encoding local programming or a real-time feed from the video camera **214** or the like. The encoder **220** outputs the respective compressed video and audio streams corresponding to the analog audio/video signal received at its input. For example, the encoder **220** can output formatted MPEG-2 or MPEG-1 packetized elementary (PES) streams or transport streams compliant to the syntax and semantics of the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) MPEG-2 standard, respectively. The PES or transport streams may be multiplexed with input signals from a switch **230**, receiver **218** and control system **232**. The multiplexing logic **222** processes the input signals and multiplexes at least a portion of the input signals into a transport stream on connection **240**. Analog input source **208** can provide an analog audio/video broadcast signal that can be input into a modulator **227**. From the modulator **227**, a modulated analog output signal can be combined at combiner **246** along with other modulated signals for transmission into transmission medium **250**. Alternatively, analog audio/video broadcast signals from the analog input source **208** can be input into the modulator **228**. Alternatively, an analog audio/video broadcast signal can be input directly from the modulator **227** to the transmission medium **250**. The analog broadcast content instances are transmitted via respective RF channels, each assigned for transmission of an analog audio/video signal such as NTSC video.

[0028] A switch, or switches, such as asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) switch **230**, provide an interface to an application server **216**. There can be multiple application servers **216** providing a variety of services such as a pay-per-view service, including video on demand (VOD), a data service, an Internet service, a network system, or a telephone system. Service and content providers may download content to an application server located within the STS **10**. The application server **216** may be located within the headend **11** or elsewhere within the STS **10**, such as in a hub. The various inputs into the headend **11** are then combined with the other information from the control system **232**, which is specific to the STS **10**, such as local programming and control information, which can include, among other things, conditional access information. The headend **11** contains one or more modulators **228** to convert the received transport streams on connection **240** into modulated output signals suitable for transmission over the transmission medium **250** through the network **18**. Each modulator **228** may be a multimodulator including a plurality of modulators, such as, but not limited to, QAM (quadrature amplitude modulation) modulators, that radio frequency modulate at least a portion of the transport streams on connection **240** to become output transport streams on connections **242**. The output signals on connections **242** from the various modulators **228** or multimodulators are combined, using equipment such as the combiner **246**, for input into the transmission medium **250**, which is sent via the in-band delivery path **254** to subscriber locations, such as the DHCT **16**.

[0029] In one embodiment, the server **216** also provides various types of data on connections **288***a*, **288***b* to the headend **11**. The data, in part, is received by the media access control (MAC) functions **224** that output MPEG transport packets containing data on connections **266***a*, **266***b* instead of digital audio/video MPEG streams. The control system **232** enables the television system operator to control and monitor the functions and performance of the STS **10**. The control system **232** interfaces with various components, via communication link **270**, in order to monitor and/or control a variety of functions, including the frequency spectrum lineup of the programming for the STS **10**, billing for each subscriber, and conditional access for the content distributed to subscribers. Information, such as conditional access information, is communicated from the control system **232** to the multiplexing logic **222** where it is multiplexed into a transport stream provided on connection **240**.

[0030] Among other things, the control system **232** provides input to the modulator **228** for setting operating parameters, such as selecting certain content instances or portions of the transport streams for inclusion in one or more output transport stream on connections **242**, system specific MPEG table packet organization, and/or conditional access information. Control information and other data can be communicated to hubs and DHCTs **16** via an in-band delivery path **254** or via an out-of-band delivery path **256**.

[0031] The out-of-band data is transmitted via the out-of-band forward data signal (FDS) **76** of the transmission

medium **250** by mechanisms such as, but not limited to, a QPSK (quadrature phase-shift keying) modem array **226**. Two-way communication utilizes the reverse data signal (RDS) **80** of the out-of-band delivery path **256**. Hubs and DHCTs **16** transmit out-of-band data through the transmission medium **250**, and the out-of-band data is received in the headend **11** via the out-of-band RDS **80**. The out-of-band data is routed through router **264** to the application server **216** or to the control system **232**. The out-of-band control information includes such information as, among many others, a pay-per-view purchase instruction and a pause viewing command from the subscriber location to a video-on-demand type application server located internally or external to the headend **11**, such as the application server **216**, as well as any other data sent from the DHCT **16** or hubs, all of which will preferably be properly timed.

[**0032**] The control system **232** also monitors, controls, and coordinates all communications in the subscriber television system **10** (**FIG. 1**), including video, audio, and data. The control system **232** can be located at the headend **11** or remotely. The control system **232** also includes a broadcast file system (BFS) server **202** that provides content to the DHCT **16**. A broadcast file system preferably carries data formatted in directories and files by the BFS server **202**, which is used for producing and transmitting data streams throughout the STS **10**, and which provides an efficient means for the delivery of application executables and application content (e.g., data) to the DHCT **16**. In particular, the BFS server **202** and its counterpart, a BFS client module **343** in the DHCT **16**, are part of the broadcast file system. The BFS server **202** repeatedly sends content to the DHCT **16** over a period of time in a cyclical manner so that the DHCT **16** may access the content as needed.

[**0033**] The transmission medium **250** distributes signals from the headend **11** to the other elements in the subscriber television system **10** (**FIG. 1**), such as a hub, a node (not shown), and subscriber locations. The transmission medium **250** can incorporate one or more of a variety of media, such as optical fiber, coaxial cable, and HFC, satellite, direct broadcast, or other transmission media.

III. DHCT and Remote Control Device

[**0034**] **FIG. 3A** is a block diagram illustration of an example DHCT **16** that is coupled to the headend **11** and a television set **341**, in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure. It will be understood that the DHCT **16** shown in **FIG. 3A** is merely illustrative and should not be construed as implying any limitations upon the scope of the preferred embodiments of the disclosure. For example, some of the functionality performed by applications executed in the DHCT **16** (such as the IPG application **397**) may instead be performed completely or in part at the headend **11** and vice versa, or not at all in some embodiments. A DHCT **16** may be a stand-alone unit or integrated into another device such as, for example, a television set or a personal computer or other display devices or an audio device, among others. The DHCT **16** preferably includes a communications interface **342** for receiving signals (video, audio and/or other data) from the headend **11** through the network **18**, and provides for reverse information to the headend **11** through the network **18**.

[**0035**] The DHCT **16** preferably includes one or more processors, such as processor **344**, which controls the functions of the DHCT **16** via a real-time, multi-threaded operating system (O.S.) **353** that enables task scheduling and switching capabilities. The DHCT **16** also includes a tuner system **345** comprising one or more tuners for tuning into a particular television channel or spacing in the radio-frequency spectrum to display content and for sending and receiving various types of content to and from the headend **11**. The tuner system **345** can select from a plurality of transmission signals provided by the subscriber television system **10** (**FIG. 1**). The tuner system **345** enables the DHCT **16** to tune to downstream content transmissions, thereby allowing a user to receive digital and/or analog content delivered in the downstream transmission via the subscriber television system **10**. The tuner system **345** includes, in one embodiment, an out-of-band tuner for bi-directional QPSK (or QAM in some embodiments) communication and one or more QAM tuners (in band) for receiving television signals. Additionally, a receiver **346** receives externally generated information, such as user inputs or commands from an input device, such as a remote control device **380**.

[**0036**] **FIG. 3B** is a schematic diagram of the example remote control device **380** illustrated in **FIG. 3A**, in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure. The example remote control device **380** includes a select button **386** for making selections on a display screen, navigation buttons **385** for navigating within a particular display screen, a menu button **388** for accessing other screens, such as a general settings screen, and a quick settings button **387** to access a quick settings display screen wherein various parameters can be changed. In one embodiment, the remote control device **380** further includes a TV capabilities query button **381** that, when selected, enables a user to invoke a discovery procedure that prompts a series of user interfaces for determining characteristics of the TV set **341**. In addition, the remote control device **380** can include a cycle button **383** that, when selected, cycles the DHCT output of a processed television signal between two or more preset formats for driving the TV set **341** through one or more physical output connections. The preset formats are preferably set by the user during the discovery procedure. Many alternative methods of providing user input may be used including a remote control device with different buttons and/or button layouts, a keyboard device, a voice activated device, etc. The embodiments of the disclosure described herein are not limited by the type of device used to provide user input.

[**0037**] Referring again to **FIG. 3A**, the DHCT **16** processes analog and/or digital transmission signals for storage in a storage device **373** such as an optical or hard disk drive, and/or for display to the television set **341**. The DHCT **16** preferably includes a signal processing system **314** and a media engine **330**. One or more of the systems of the signal processing system **314** can be implemented with software, a combination of software and hardware, or preferably in hardware. The signal processing system **314** includes a demodulating system **316** and a demultiplexer/parser **318**. The demodulating system **316** comprises functionality for demodulating an analog transmission signal or a differently modulated signal carrying digital transmission signals or information. For instance, the demodulating system **316** can demodulate a signal in the tuned frequency spacing that was modulated, among others, as a QAM-modulated signal that carries compressed digital television signals or information. The demultiplexer/parser **318** can include MPEG-2 trans-

port demultiplexing. For example, when tuned to frequency spacings carrying a digital transmission signal, the demultiplexer/parser **318** enables the separation of packets of data corresponding to one or more desired video and audio streams of one or more television signals for further processing. Concurrently, the demultiplexer/parser **318** precludes further processing of packets in the multiplexed transport stream that are irrelevant or not desired, such as packets of data corresponding to other video streams. Thus, the components of the signal processing system **314** are capable of QAM demodulation, forward error correction, and demultiplexing of MPEG-2 transport streams, and parsing of elementary streams and packetized elementary streams. Additional components, not shown, include conditional access components, as well as, among others, an analog video decoder for processing an analog transmission signal and, in one implementation, a compression engine for converting a decoded analog transmission signal to compressed audio and video streams that are produced in accordance with the syntax and semantics of a designated audio and video coding method, such as specified by the MPEG-2 audio and MPEG-2 video ISO standard, among others.

[**0038**] The signal processing system **314** outputs packetized compressed streams and presents them as input for storage in the storage device **373**, or in other implementations, as input to the media engine **330** for decompression by a video decoder (or video decompression engine) **333** and an audio decoder (or audio decompression engine) **332** for display on the TV set **341** via the output system **331** and output connections **340**. One having ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the signal processing system **314** will preferably include other components not shown, including memory, decryptors, samplers, digitizers (e.g., analog-to-digital converters), and multiplexers, among other components. Further, it will be understood that one or more of the components listed above will interface with the processor **344** and/or system memory **349** (and/or dedicated memory for a particular component) to facilitate data transfer and/or processing of the video and/or audio signal for display and/or storage.

[**0039**] The media engine **330** includes the digital video decoder **333**, digital audio decoder **332**, a memory controller **334**, a blitter **337**, and the output system **331**. The media engine **330** is capable of graphics data generation and graphics data processing capabilities with functional modules such as the blitter **337**, which is a functional 2-D (i.e., 2-dimensional) DMA (Direct-Memory-Access) module, often referred to as a blit engine. The functionality in the blitter **337** allows for graphical data or image data stored in a media memory **329** or system memory **349** to be read into the media engine **330**, processed, and written back (i.e. output) to memory. The graphical data or image data is read in some predetermined 2-D order, such as raster scan order, and processed in systematic, pipelined-fashion through one or more functional elements in the blitter **337**. Processing through the blitter **337** can cause one or more pixels of the input image to be changed to a new value. The output image to memory is representative of a pre-specified set of blitter operations.

[**0040**] During the course of program execution, the processor **344** writes operation settings and/or parameters to registers in the media engine **330** to effect one or more operations in one or more input images to be processed through the blitter **337**. Typically, the processor **344** sets the registers prior to invoking the blit operation.

[**0041**] According to the mode set for the blit operation, the number of input pixels read from an input image in a blit operation may be less than, equal to, or more than the number of output pixels produced and written back to memory. According to the mode set in registers, a blit operation may comprise of reading multiple input images to produce an output image, such as an alpha-blending operation on two input images. A blit operation may be also set to produce more than one output image. A blit operation may further be set to process pixels of an input image conditionally (e.g., only if they have a certain value or meet certain conditions).

[**0042**] Blitter functionality further includes a scaling capability that can be employed to effect vertical and/or horizontal scaling of an input image. Thus, an input image can be upscaled or downscaled according to the operational mode and parameters written to the corresponding blitter registers. Such scaling operations can be used to modify the aspect ratio of an input image, for example, from a 4 by 3 aspect (i.e., 4:3) ratio (horizontal to vertical ratio) to a 16 by 9 (i.e., 16:9) aspect ratio. Furthermore, the blitter **337** can be set to perform color conversion or alter the color of an input image.

[**0043**] The scaling functionality in the blitter **337** can be performed with sample-rate converters or scaling filters of multiple taps and phases, as known to those practicing digital signal processing in the state-of-art.

[**0044**] As described previously, the blitter **337** is capable of scaling an input image with a 4:3 aspect-ratio to another aspect-ratio, such as a 16:9, although often at the expense of introducing distortion. The blitter **337** can further be set for the blit operation to crop the boundaries of the input image, prior to conducting the scaling operation, by simply omitting to read (or input) parts of the input image from memory. The blitter **337** can also crop the boundaries of the input image it is processing after conducting the scaling operation by simply omitting to write (or output) parts of the input image to memory. For instance, the blitter **337** is capable of processing an image and cropping it by omitting to write to media memory **329** a pre-specified top and bottom portion or rectangular sections. The left and right exterior portions, or pillars, of an input image can be similarly cropped.

[**0045**] As described previously, the blitter **337** possesses capability to perform color conversion on each pixel of the input graphical data from one color format to another color format. For example, color conversion may comprise converting an input image from an RGB color format to a YPbPr color format, or vice-versa.

[**0046**] Color conversion may also comprise conversion between color primaries specifications, such as from the color primaries specified in ITU-R (International Telecommunication Union-Radiocommunication) Recommendation BT.601 to the color primaries specified ITU-R Recommendation BT.709. In one embodiment, color conversion is employed to create an image that is displayed during an interactive discovery phase to determine the color "temperature" of a TV set or display attached to the DHCT **16**.

[**0047**] The blitter **337** further possesses capability to perform a color transformation that represents a non-linear

transfer-function from input to output to correct for the perceived intensity (i.e., lightness) of the type of TV set **341** or display driven by the DHCT **16**. This color transformation could be for the purpose of what is often called by practitioners in the state of the art as gamma correction (i.e., correction of perceived intensity), or the color transformation can be for other purposes that assist in the TV discovery phase.

[**0048**] All aforementioned blitter operations as well as other blitter operations, as a whole or any combination thereof, may be employed to create images for use during the TV discovery phase.

[**0049**] The media engine **330** processes and feeds data for output via the output system **331** to a television set **341**. The output system **331** is configured (e.g., by the processor **344**) to convert processed video and graphical pictures that are composited by the media engine **330** to a video signal for output, such signal consistent with the format and signaling specification of a port in the set of physical output ports **340** in the DHCT **16**. As an example, the output system **331** includes a digital video encoder (DENC) **336** that converts reconstructed video data (or pictures) fed (or otherwise received) at its input to an analog video signal that is output through a port in the set of physical output ports **340** to drive a TV display connected to the DHCT **16**. In one embodiment, the same output video signal is output simultaneously through a plurality of ports in the set of physical output ports **340**.

[**0050**] The set of physical output ports **340** may comprise of physical connectors for which one end of a corresponding physical cable is attached to, while the opposite end of the cable is attached to a corresponding physical connector in the TV set **341** (or display). A physical connector in the set of physical output ports **340** may also be a wireless transmitter or emitter device that emits the video signal to a corresponding wireless receiver in the TV set **341**. An auxiliary device, such as a second TV display, may be also be connected between the DHCT **16** and the TV set **341** through a second set of corresponding connectors.

[**0051**] A physical connector in the set of physical output ports **340** may also serve as both input and output, as input, or as an asymmetrical output-input port wherein video and audio are output to the TV set **341** and the TV set's display status and/or capabilities, characteristics, or attributes are input to the DHCT **16**.

[**0052**] Data is fed to one of the physical output ports **340** sourced from the media engine memory **329** or memory **349** in a manner to produce a raster scan of displayed pixels consistent with the interface or port of the physical output ports **340** in which the display type is connected to the DHCT **16**. As is described below, the output system **331**, under the direction of a display manager **335** and in cooperation with the processor **344** and operating system **353**, provides a formatted signal to one or more ports of the physical output ports **340** that are coupled to corresponding inputs (not shown) at the TV set **341**, or at other devices such as a VCR, among others. The physical output ports **340** include a RGB port, a S-Video port, a channel 3/4 port, a baseband port, component analog port, and/or a YPbPr port. TV signals are formatted by the DHCT **16** according to well-known video interface specifications. For example, TV signals routed to the baseband port are formatted by the DHCT **16** according to a baseband video format specification. Baseband video can be analog NTSC (or PAL or SECAM) baseband video. Similarly, TV signals routed to the Ch. 3/4 RF (radio frequency) output port are formatted as RF. The S-video port is for S-video, which is the same as baseband video except that the luminance and chroma are transferred on separate wires. YPrPb is an analog component interface that is popular in early HDTV displays. It couples luminance (Y) and two color difference signals (Pr and Pb) to the display device. The same components when digitized are referred to as Y, Cr and Cb. Other connections of the physical output ports **340** include a digital video interface (DVI) to drive a TV set or display that receives non-compressed digital TV signals at its input, and/or an IEEE-1394 interface (not shown) to drive a TV set or display with a possibly-compressed digital TV signal, among others. DVI is a digital interface often used to transmit HDTV signals to a display. In some embodiments, some interfaces, such as the DVI interface or interfaces or ports not shown, can be bi-directional.

[**0053**] A display buffer (not shown) in media memory **329** is designated for the displayable graphical data. The memory controller **334** in the media engine **330** grants access to transfer data from system memory **349** or other sections of media memory **329** to the display buffer in a timely way that safeguards from the generation of tear artifacts on the TV display. For instance, data transfer can be granted to locations in the display buffer corresponding to locations already passed by the raster-scan ordered data fed from the display buffer into the DENC **336**. Thus, data written to the display buffer is always behind (in raster-scan order) the display buffer locations read and fed into the output system **331**. Alternatively, data can be written to a secondary display buffer (not shown), also called an off-screen or composition buffer and the display buffer and the off-screen buffer can be logically swapped, for example, during the vertical blanking interval of the output TV signal.

[**0054**] Under the arbitration of the memory controller **334**, the audio decoder **332** and the video decoder **333** decode the compressed audio and video signals stored in compressed buffers (not shown) in the media memory **329** to obtain the corresponding audio and video data in an uncompressed format. The reconstructed or uncompressed audio and video data are stored in uncompressed buffers (not shown) in the media memory **329**. The process of decoding is coordinated by the memory controller **334** such that each of the decoders **332** and **333** are granted access or authorization every time the respective decoder imports data from or exports data to the media memory **329**. Data stored in the decoded buffers may be fed to the output system **331** and the audio output system (not shown) under the arbitration of the memory controller **334**. The audio output system may be part of the output system **331** and may include digital-to-analog converters (DACs). The output system **331**, for instance, includes a DENC **336** that provides a video output via physical output ports **340** while the audio DAC (not shown) provides an audio output via an audio connection (not shown). The video signal, which has been converted and possibly composited with graphics, is formatted appropriately for output via the output system **331** in cooperation with the display manager **335**, operating system **353**, and processor **344**, in accordance with a video interface type and a video format of the display device that is receiving the

video output (e.g., high definition television (HDTV), NTSC or phase alternate line (PAL)).

[0055] The output system **331** comprises capabilities to convert processed video and graphical pictures simultaneously for output. A video display pipeline (VPipe) **338** in the output system **331** receives (or is fed) video pictures from the media memory **329** and processes the pictures for output in a systematic fashion. In one embodiment, the video display pipeline **338** includes (not shown) one or more line buffers and vertical sample-rate converters to effect vertical resizing, horizontal sample-rate converters to effect horizontal resizing, and/or in-line color-conversion capabilities. Furthermore, the video display pipeline **338** may include memory and circuit logic (programmable in some embodiments) to effect picture de-interlacing of interlaced pictures for display as progressive or as larger interlaced pictures. The de-interlacing process may involve the access of the media memory **329** to read a plurality of lines from one or more fields corresponding to one or more consecutive video pictures from a TV signal to process them and generate each line of a converted video picture.

[0056] A graphics display pipeline (GPipe) **339** in the output system **331** receives (or is fed) graphical pictures or data from a display buffer in media memory **329** and processes the images for output in a systematic fashion. The graphics display pipeline **339** may include (not shown) one or more line buffers and/or vertical scalers (e.g., sample-rate converters) to effect vertical resizing. The graphics display pipeline **339** can also have horizontal scalers or sample-rate converters to effect horizontal resizing, and/or in-line color-conversion capabilities to effect color conversion.

[0057] The output system **331** further includes programmable digital logic and control circuitry (not shown), among other circuitry, to overlay or composite the converted graphical picture at the end of the graphics display pipeline over the converted video picture at the end of the video display pipeline **338** (or vice versa). The converted graphical picture and the converted video picture may be composited with a common center but do not have to be of the same picture resolution. For instance, the converted video picture may span a 1280×720 picture of 16:9 aspect ratio while the graphical picture may span a 960×720 picture of 12:9 (or equivalently 4:3) aspect ratio.

[0058] The output system **331** further comprises programmable digital logic and control circuitry (not shown) to enable and disable the video display pipeline **338**, to enable and disable the graphics display pipeline **339**, and/or to alpha blend the spatially corresponding pixels output by the two respective display pipelines **338**,**339** to appear as a mix (or translucent) picture that is output to the TV set **341**. Some pixels in the graphical picture may have a transparent color value.

[0059] The output system **331** preferably generates a TV signal for output to the TV set **341** according to the specification of the video interface used for a particular output port **340**. If the video display pipeline **338** is disabled, a graphical picture is displayed on the screen of TV set **341**. If the graphical display pipeline **339** is disabled, the video picture (e.g., from a tuned TV channel, from the storage device **373**, etc.) is displayed on the TV set **341**. In one embodiment, the DHCT **16** performs an interactive discovery session to find the TV set display or TV set characteristics by outputting simultaneously a TV signal through a first output port of the physical output ports **340** and another TV signal through a second output port of the physical output ports **340**. For example, a first video display pipeline (not shown) of the video display pipeline **338** in the output system **331** is employed to convert a video picture for output through the aforementioned first output port of the physical output ports **340** and a second video display pipeline (not shown) of the video display pipeline **338** in the output system **331** is employed to convert the same or different video picture for output through the aforementioned second output port of the physical output ports **340**.

[0060] In another embodiment, a first video display pipeline (not shown) of the video display pipeline **338** and a first graphics display pipeline (not shown) of the graphics display pipeline **339** in the output system **331** are employed during the discovery phase to output a TV signal through an output port (e.g., a first output port) of the physical output ports **340** as either a video picture or as a composition of a video picture and a graphical picture. A second video display pipeline (not shown) of the video display pipeline **338** in the output system **331** is employed to output a TV signal through another (e.g., a second) output port of the physical output ports **340**.

[0061] In another embodiment, a second graphics display pipeline (not shown) of the graphics display pipeline **339** is also employed (along with a second video display pipeline) during the discovery phase to output a TV signal through the second output port as either a video picture or as a composition of a video picture and a graphical picture.

[0062] The DHCT **16** can include one or more storage devices, such as storage device **373**, preferably integrated into the DHCT **16** through an interface **375** (e.g., IDE (integrated drive electronics) or SCSI (small computer system interface), etc.), or externally coupled to the DHCT **16** via a communication port **374**. The communication port **374** can be a wireless or wired interface, and is for receiving and/or transmitting data to other devices. For instance, the DHCT **16** may feature USB (Universal Serial Bus), Ethernet (for connection to a computer), IEEE-1394 (for connection to media content devices in an entertainment center), serial, and/or parallel ports. The storage device **373** can be optical (e.g. read/write compact disc), but is preferably a hard disk drive. The storage device **373** includes one or more media, such as a hard disk **301**. A storage device controller **379** in the storage device **373** of DHCT **16**, in cooperation with a device driver **311** and the operating system **353**, grants access to write data to or read data from the local storage device **373**. The processor **344** can transfer content (e.g., data) from memory **349** to the local storage device **373** or from the local storage device **373** to the memory **349** by communication and acknowledgement with the storage device controller **379**.

[0063] In one embodiment, data stored, written, and retrieved from the storage device **373** includes one or more images to be processed during a discovery phase to determine the type of TV set or display attached to or otherwise in communication with the DHCT **16** and the characteristics of the TV set or display. Data stored in the storage device **373** can also include one or more sets of audio samples to be played back during the discovery phase. For example, the audio samples can be speech instructions or other types of

audio. One or more picture sequences can also to be stored and retrieved in the storage device **373** for use during the discovery phase.

[**0064**] In one embodiment, data stored, written, and retrieved from storage device **373** includes one or more images to be displayed as a graphical picture during a discovery phase to determine the type of TV set or display attached to the DHCT **16** and the characteristics of the same. Data stored in the storage device **373** can also include one or more sets of audio samples to be played back during the discovery phase. One or more picture sequences can also to be stored and retrieved in the storage device **373** for use during the discovery phase. The storage device **373** can include graphical pictures and video picture sequences of different characteristics such as pictures of different picture aspect ratios, different colorimetry, different gammas, and/or different pixel aspect ratio, among other characteristics. Distorted pictures and pictures with, for example, side blank pillars, blank top and bottom rectangular regions, or a box with blanked rectangular regions may also be stored in the storage device **373** for employment during the discovery phase.

[**0065**] The DHCT **16** includes memory **349**, which includes volatile and/or non-volatile memory, for storing various applications, modules and data for execution and use by the processor **344**. Basic functionality of the DHCT **16** is provided by an operating system **353**. Among other things, the operating system **353** includes a resource manager **367** that provides an interface to resources of the DHCT **16** such as, for example, computing resources, and a broadcast file system (BFS) client **343** that cooperates with the BFS server **202** (**FIG. 2**) to receive data and/or applications that are delivered from the BFS server **202** in a carousel fashion. The operating system **353** further includes one or more device drivers, such as device driver **311**, that works in cooperation with the operating system **353** to provide operating instructions for communicating with peripheral devices.

[**0066**] Data to be used during the discovery phase can be transmitted to and received by the DHCT **16** as one or more files using the broadcast file system (via BFS server **202** (**FIG. 2**) and BFS module **343**). Data can further be stored in the storage device **373** prior to exercising the discovery phase.

[**0067**] One or more programmed software applications, herein referred to as applications, are executed by utilizing the computing resources in the DHCT **16**. Note that an application typically includes a client part and a server counterpart that cooperate to provide the complete functionality of the application. The applications may be resident in memory **349** or the storage device **373**, or stored in a combination of memory **349** and storage device **373**. Applications stored in memory **349** (or storage device **373**) are executed by the processor **344** (e.g., a central processing unit or digital signal processor) under the auspices of the operating system **353**. Data required as input by an application is stored in memory **349** or the storage device **373** (or a combination) and read by the processor **344** as needed during the course of the application's execution.

[**0068**] Input data may be stored in memory **349** by a secondary application or other source, either internal or external to the DHCT **16**, or possibly anticipated by the application and thus created with the application at the time it was generated as a software application. Data generated by an application is stored in memory **349** by the processor **344** during the course of the application's execution, or if required, transferred to the storage device **373** from memory **349** by the processor **344** during the course of the application's execution. The availability of data, location of data, whether in memory **349** or in the local storage device **373**, and the amount of data generated by a first application for consumption by a secondary application is communicated by messages. Messages are communicated through the services of the operating system **353**, such as interrupt or polling mechanisms or data sharing mechanisms such as semaphores.

[**0069**] An application referred to as a navigator **355** is resident in memory **349**. The navigator **355** provides a navigation framework for services provided by the DHCT **16**. For instance, the navigator **355** includes core functionality such as volume and configuration settings. The navigator **355** preferably handles signals invoked from the channel navigation buttons on the remote control device **380**.

[**0070**] The memory **349** also contains a platform library **356**. The platform library **356** is a collection of utilities useful to applications, such as a timer manager, a compression manager, a configuration manager, an HTML parser, a database manager, a widget toolkit, a string manager, and other utilities (not shown). These utilities are accessed by applications via application programming interfaces (APIs) as necessary so that each application does not have to contain these utilities. Two components of the platform library **356** that are shown in **FIG. 3A** are a window manager **359** and a service application manager (SAM) client **357**. Note that in some embodiments, one or more of the platform library components may be resident in the operating system **353**. The window manager **359** provides a mechanism for implementing the sharing of the display device screen regions and user input. The window manager **359** in the DHCT **16** is responsible for, as directed by one or more applications, implementing the creation, display, and de-allocation of the limited DHCT screen resources. It allows multiple applications to share the screen by assigning ownership of screen regions, or windows.

[**0071**] The window manager **359** also maintains, among other things, a user input registry **350** in memory **349** so that when a user enters a key or a command via the remote control device **380** or another input device such as a keyboard or mouse, the user input registry **350** is accessed to determine which of various applications running on the DHCT **16** should receive data corresponding to the input key and in which order.

[**0072**] The SAM client **357** is a client component of a client-server pair of components, with the server component being located in the headend **11**, typically in the control system **232** (**FIG. 2**), although not shown. A SAM database **360** (i.e. structured data such as a database or data structure) in memory **349** includes a data structure of services and a data structure of channels that are created and updated by the headend **11**. Herein, database will refer to a database, structured data or other data structures as is well known to those of ordinary skill in the art. The SAM client **357** also interfaces with the resource manager **367** to control resources of the DHCT **16**. Many services can be defined

using the same application component, with different parameters. Examples of services include, without limitation and in accordance with one implementation, presenting television programs (available through a WatchTV application **362**), pay-per-view events (available through a PPV application (not shown)), digital music (not shown), media-on-demand (available through an MOD application (not shown)), and an interactive program guide (IPG) (available through an IPG application **397**).

[**0073**] In the example DHCT **16** depicted in **FIG. 3A**, memory **349** also includes a web browser application **366** for providing web browsing services and a personal video recording (PVR) application **377** for providing personal video recording services. It should be clear to one with ordinary skill in the art that these applications are not limiting and merely serve as examples for this present embodiment of the disclosure. These applications, and others provided by the cable system operator, are top level software entities on the network for providing services to the user.

[**0074**] An executable program or algorithm corresponding to an operating system (OS) component, or to a client platform component, or to an application, or to respective parts thereof, can reside in and execute out of memory **349** and/or the storage device **373**. Likewise, data input into or output from any executable program can reside in memory **349** and/or the storage device **373**.

IV. Example Method for Determining Display Device Characteristics

[**0075**] As described above, there are many possible video formats that are received by the DHCT **16** and converted to a television signal compliant with the appropriate video interface specification for the respective port of the physical output ports **340**. For example, ATSC includes 18 different video formats, which include parameters for the amount of active lines, total lines, horizontal pixels (e.g., pixels per line), aspect ratio (e.g., 16:9 or 4:3), vertical rate, frame rate, scan type (progressive or interlaced), and type of TV set (e.g., SDTV or HDTV) that a particular format is best suited for. For a TV set capable of sourcing a TV signal through more than one video interface or with a video interface that supports more than one video format, the nature of the picture displayed on a TV screen (or other display screen) can vary depending on what format the DHCT **16** configures the output signal (e.g., output from the output ports **340** to the TV set **341**) to be. Accurate assumptions about the characteristics of the TV set **341** or display can be made based on the nature of the picture displayed in response to the video format of the television signal fed to the TV set **341** from the DHCT **16**. Although the DHCT **16** does not know what type of TV set it is connected to, nor the characteristics of that TV set, it can output some predefined video formats and query the user about what he or she sees. Based on the response of the user, not only can the DHCT **16** determine the characteristics of the TV set connected (e.g., aspect ratio, color temperature, gamma characteristics, etc.), but also provide for a fine tuning of the picture quality that improves what the user sees.

[**0076**] Note that in some embodiments some of these characteristics may be input by the user in response to a query by the DHCT **16** (e.g., the DHCT **16** can prompt questions on the TV display, such as "what type of TV do you have? year made? model number? manufacturer?," etc.).

[**0077**] Even if characteristics are input by a user, a discovery phase may still be employed where, for example, a TV set **341** has multiple interfaces to receive the output TV signal from the DHCT **16** and the user may have pre-configured the TV set **341** to a user-specific set of preferences. For instance, a user may opt to pre-configure a TV set **341** with a physical screen (e.g., the glass portion of the screen, screen portion of a projection TV, etc.) having a 4:3 aspect ratio using the TV set's settings to display a 16:9 TV signal received from the DHCT **16** in one of multiple configurable displayable ways. That is, the user can set a 16:9 TV signal to be displayed as, for example, a letterboxed picture (e.g., blank top and bottom portions envelope picture), as a distorted picture, or as a full-screen picture without distortion but with the left- and right-most portions cropped.

[**0078**] An interactive session(s) (or application(s)) that serves as a discovery phase according to an embodiment of the disclosure is executed upon power-up, or at other times such as when the user hooks up a different TV set to the DHCT **16**, to determine the capabilities of the TV set **341** coupled to the DHCT **16**. The discovery phase can be viewed as comprising two phases. Phase I includes determining how the TV set **341** can be driven. The TV set **341** can be a high definition television (HDTV) set, a national television systems committee (NTSC) set, or a PAL set. It is in phase I that the sourced TV signal received at the tuner system **345** of the DHCT **16** is mapped to a corresponding output of the DHCT **16** (and thus corresponding input of a TV set **341**). For example, through one or more interactive sessions with the user, the DHCT **16** (or user) may decide that when the DHCT **16** is tuned to SD (standard definition) or NTSC channels, the signal is to be processed and fed through the baseband port or S-video port of the physical output ports **340**. Similarly, if the DHCT **16** is tuned to an HD channel, the DHCT **16** (or user) may determine that the signal is to be processed and fed through the YPbPr port or the DVI port of the physical output ports **340**. Phase II includes determining additional characteristics of the TV set **341**, which serves as a calibration process. For example, it is in phase II that the color temperature, gamma characteristics, and/or de-interlacing characteristics or capabilities, among others, can be verified or determined.

[**0079**] **FIG. 4** is a flow diagram of one example method for implementing phase I and phase II of the discovery phase, in accordance with one embodiment of the disclosure. The blocks in the flow diagram of **FIG. 4** should be understood as representing modules, segments, or portions of code which include one or more executable instructions for implementing specific logical functions or steps in the process. Alternate implementations are included within the scope of the preferred embodiments of the present disclosure in which functions may be executed out of order from that shown or discussed, including substantially concurrently or in reverse order, or with additional steps or steps omitted, depending on the functionality involved, as would be understood by those reasonably skilled in the art of the present disclosure.

[**0080**] Referring to **FIG. 4**, and with continued reference to **FIG. 3A**, step **402** includes receiving a request to com-

mence discovery. The discovery phase can be invoked using a dedicated key or button in the remote control device **380** (**FIG. 3B**), such as the TV capabilities query button **381** (**FIG. 3B**). An interactive session can also be accomplished through a quick settings user interface screen (e.g., not shown, but evoked by the user selecting the quick settings button **387**, **FIG. 3B**) or through a general settings screen (e.g., not shown, but evoked by the user navigating through menu items upon pressing the menu button **388**, **FIG. 3B**).

[**0081**] Step **404** includes converting a video or picture sequence according to a defined video interface specification. Representative pictures or video sequences that include the different video formats in ATSC A/54 or SCTE 43, for example, which vary in parameters such as aspect ratio (e.g., 4:3 versus 16:9), TV type (e.g., SDTV versus HDTV), among others, are used during the discovery phase. The video formats are processed for output by appropriately exercising conversion capabilities in the TV output system **331** according to defined categories of parameters for a video output interface and to provide some efficiency in the driving of outputs. The pictures or video sequences (and/or audio) can be provided by the DHCT **16** as a result of real-time or time-shifted (e.g., buffered to the storage device **373**) conversion of a TV signal received from the network **18** (**FIG. 1**). Preferably, picture or video sequence samples of various parameters are stored in the storage device **373** and provided by the DHCT **16** during the discovery phase. For example, these samples can be downloaded to the storage device **373** upon receipt via the BFS module **343** or downloaded by the DHCT manufacturer. Additionally, graphics, video, or a combination of graphics and video can be provided during the discovery phase according to the mechanisms described in association with **FIG. 3A**.

[**0082**] Step **406** includes driving one or more display devices through the physical output port with a video format corresponding to the video interface specification to which the conversion in step **404** was implemented. The DHCT cycles through each video format in response to the user selecting the cycle button **383**, or in alternative embodiments, automatically for a defined interval of time, requesting input from the user for each format. The display manager **335**, in cooperation with the media engine **330**, the operating system **353**, memory (e.g., memory **349** and/or media memory **329**), and the processor **344**, preferably is responsible for cycling the various video formats through the output connections **340** to the inputs of the TV set **341**. The cycle is preferably set from the highest resolution to the lowest resolution. For example, the DHCT may output **1080*i*** first, and then output **720*p***, then **480*p***, and then **480*i***. Once a user enters input, it is assumed that the TV set **341** is to be driven at the highest resolution format to minimize degradation of the highest resolution TV set that is sourced. Driving the TV set with a common video format simplifies graphics overlay management by the display manager **335** and operating system **353** as it shortens development cycle and reduces provisions required to support legacy applications. In some embodiments, the DHCT **16** can transmit audio instructions in addition to or in lieu of the video and/or graphics data.

[**0083**] Step **408** includes soliciting a user response based on what is displayed on the TV screen. In one embodiment, the display manager **335**, in cooperation with the processor **344**, can cause the generation and presentation of various GUI screens to solicit help from a user to determine the type of inputs that are supported by the TV set **341**. One purpose for driving the inputs of the TV set **341** is to present a picture on the screen of the TV set **341** along with a GUI screen that enables the user to comment on whether he or she sees any picture on the display. Note that in other embodiments, audio instructions (e.g., such as speech instructions) can be used, alone or in combination with graphics and/or video, to solicit user feedback and/or provide instruction which would facilitate the determination of how the TV set **341** can be driven.

[**0084**] Step **410** includes determining whether user input was received within a defined period of time defined by a fixed or programmable threshold. The failure to receive an inputted response from the user may indicate that the user did not see a screen (e.g., there may not be a connection made by the user or the particular video format cycled through the output port is not supported). If a video format applied to the TV set input was not compatible with the TV set (e.g., a video format that is not compatible with the scan format or other characteristics of the TV set **341**), or no connection has been made between the DHCT port and the corresponding TV set port, an out-of-synch picture is likely to be displayed. If the DHCT **16** determines that no user input is received within a predetermined or defined period of time of driving the TV set with a signal having a prescribed video format, the DHCT **16** automatically selects a new port, or another video format for the same output port (e.g., if more than one video format is supported by the selected output port) (step **422**), and repeats the process starting at step **404**. In some embodiments, selection of the next port is not automatically initiated until a user enters input, regardless of whether instructions or other messaging on the screen is viewable or not, thus omitting the determination step (step **410**). For example, instructions in a written user's guide (or by phone) can require a user to enter one type of input (e.g., the cycle button **383**, **FIG. 3B**) when the video is out-of-synch (e.g., instructions do not appear), and another type of input (e.g., the select button **387**, **FIG. 3B**) when the displayed picture and/or instructions are coherent (e.g., observable and/or legible). In some embodiments without the automatic feature, the determination step may still be employed.

[**0085**] The programmable threshold that defines the period of time for cycling through the video formats and/or output ports may be programmed and stored in NVM **348** of the DHCT **16**. Alternatively, the threshold value can be stored in the storage device **373** of the DHCT **16** or in NVM (not shown) in the remote control device **380**. Programming of the threshold value can be performed at a manufacturing facility, by a cable operator from the headend **11** while the DHCT **16** is at a subscriber's or user's premise, or by the subscriber or user.

[**0086**] If a GUI is viewable, suggesting that the cycled video format is both established through a valid connection to the TV set **341** and that the TV set **341** can be driven using that applied video format, step **412** includes mapping the video interface specification and corresponding port with a parameter or parameters of the TV signal, video sequence or picture. In other words, the DHCT **16** stores in memory (e.g., media memory **329**, memory **349**, and/or the storage device **373**, **FIG. 3A**) the parameter(s) or settings required to operate the video display pipeline **338** and/or graphics

display pipeline **339**, the functions in the output system **331**, and the output ports **340** to effect the processing and output of a TV signal according to the parameters of each possible TV signal format that DHCT **16** is capable of receiving via its tuner system **345 (FIG. 3A)** or an input or communication port. In addition to storing the parameters and settings required to process and output each respective TV signal format, the DHCT **16** stores a table (not shown) that associates each possible TV signal format to one or more designated output ports **340**. For example, for TV signals that have parameters that indicate the signal originated in or is otherwise compliant to an HD transmission medium, the DHCT **16** determines the parameters of the received TV signal by, for example, processing information in the signal and comparing the information with information stored in the SAM database **360**. The SAM database **360** may include stored information in an association table (not shown) that maps the TV signal to a designated output port. The DHCT **16** then converts the TV signal, and drives the converted TV signal through the designated port (e.g., YPbPr port) of the physical output ports **340**.

[**0087**] For formats where a display is generated and viewable by the user, additional formats can be presented through this interactive session to fine-tune what the user is viewing. Step **414** includes applying test sequences for phase II discovery. For example, one category of driving the TV set inputs can be according to the scan format (e.g., interlaced versus progressive). Within an interlaced category, there are multiple video formats (e.g., with differences in resolution (e.g., **1080*i***, **480*i***, etc.), aspect ratio, among other parameters). If the TV set **341** has the capability to only receive an input with a progressive scan format, then driving it with an interlaced scan format may result in no displayable screen (e.g., a scrambled picture), thus negating the need to drive the TV set inputs with other video formats under the category of interlaced. The test sequences are received from memory in a manner as described above for step **402**, and processed (e.g., altered) in the blitter **337** in cooperation with the display manager **335** and the processor **344 (FIG. 3A)**. In one embodiment, the samples are altered in a manner that causes images on the TV screen to be distorted and/or appear with a variety of features (e.g., cropped) and/or or omissions of features and/or accentuations in features or conditions (e.g., taking a circle and expanding in a vertical or horizontal orientation to create an ellipse). By altering the samples, a display screen comprising, in one embodiment, a GUI and an altered image sample, can be presented that enables the DHCT **16** to determine how the TV set **341** reacts to or presents these altered images based on the user response. Some of the samples stored in the storage device **373** can be altered samples, or in some embodiments, the alterations can be implemented in the media engine **330** or via a combination of stored altered samples and processing in the media engine **330**.

[**0088**] Step **416** includes soliciting a user response based on what is displayed on the TV screen. Based on the video format selected and the alteration imposed in step **414**, there is an expected effect on the picture presented on the TV screen, and this expected effect is used to generate the appropriate question to the user on the display screen to help determine the characteristic of the TV set **341 (FIG. 3A)** the question was geared to find. Soliciting a user response can also include requesting user preferences. For example, the user may be presented with alternate pictures having different colors and asked to choose a preferred color.

[**0089**] Step **418** includes determining characteristics of the display device based on the solicited user response. Running through interactive screens shown in **FIGS. 5-8** (and other screens not shown) and soliciting answers to the questions presented in these screens enables the DHCT to determine the capabilities of the TV and allows the user alternate display options of video and graphics throughout the course of viewing the picture in the display screen of the TV set **341**. Hence, the user has a mechanism for selecting a video format for the video (and graphic) that the viewer can simply invoke for different sourced video signals. This allows the user the flexibility to display a sourced picture of a certain aspect ratio to the aspect ratio of the TV set or in a manner the user chooses. For example, the preferred embodiments of the disclosure allows the viewer to expand a sourced 4:3 content out to the edges of a 4:3 HDTV (i.e., full screen rather than a boxed in display).

[**0090**] Step **420** includes storing the TV set display characteristics. One or more non-volatile memory (NVM) bits (not shown) in memory **349** (or the characteristics can be stored in the storage device **373**, **FIG. 3A) (FIG. 3A)** are assigned to denote a default value: "never set" or "set". Once set, the capabilities of the connected TV set **341** are retained in NVM **348**. If the user employs a different TV set in the future, the interactive sessions of the preferred embodiments of the disclosure can be re-entered via the TV capabilities query button **381**, general settings, quick settings, front key input on the DHCT **16**, or via other buttons on the remote control device **380 (FIG. 3B)** using key sequences as explained in a user's manual.

[**0091**] Step **422** includes selecting another port or another format for the same port, and then the discovery process is repeated again beginning at step **404**.

[**0092**] Therefore, during an interactive session that requests input from the user, the DHCT **16** cycles through each video format requesting input from the viewer rather than merely terminating when a first video format category suitable for driving the TV set **341** is determined. Hence, the input from the user preferably does not cease after the user acknowledges being able to view a first viewable display screen, but rather after completion of cycling through all or substantially all video formats.

[**0093**] Note that in some embodiments, phase I can be implemented for all ports and completed before commencing phase II.

[**0094**] Also, in some embodiments, the user may decide on which output port of the physical output ports **340 (FIG. 3A)** to output each possible picture format of the input, incoming or tuned TV signal. For instance, a user may express his or her preferences in interactive sessions during the TV capability discovery phase to output an incoming TV (video) signal through an output port capable of outputting the scan rate equivalent to the scan rate of the incoming TV signal. Furthermore, the user may decide through the interactive sessions to select an output port for each respective TV channel in the channel line-up, assuming that the user knows the picture format of each channel or that the interactive session displays information on the screen containing the picture format associated with each channel to the user.

User preferences are stored in memory, for example memory **349 (FIG. 3A)**, and/or the storage device **373 (FIG. 3A)**.

[**0095**] The picture format associated with each channel may be known a priori. For example, the picture format may be obtained or inferred by the processor **344 (FIG. 3A)** from the record of each program in an EPG or IPG database (not shown) residing in memory **349 (FIG. 3A)**, or from information associated with each service or TV channel in the SAM tables (e.g., SAM database **360, FIG. 3A)** residing in memory **349**. Alternatively, the DHCT **16 (FIG. 3A)** may determine the picture format for each TV channel, service or program by tuning to each channel in the channel line-up. Since the picture rate for a TV channel may change through the course of time, the user may further prefer to allow the DHCT **16** to dynamically switch output ports according to the incoming TV signal's picture format.

[**0096**] The discovery phase retains (e.g., by saving in memory **349, FIG. 3A)** the output formats or modes that the DHCT **16 (FIG. 3A)** is capable of outputting. A user may opt to eliminate one or more output capability from the plurality of output capabilities found during the discovery phase. During normal TV watching operation, the user has access to select any of the retained outputting modes (e.g., via quick settings or a remote key). The DHCT **16** may be configured to output in one picture format (e.g., **1080*i***) or to dynamically adjust to output according to the picture format of the incoming TV signal. Regardless of whether the DHCT **16** outputs in a fixed format indefinitely, the user has access to the list of retained output modes and select an alternate output mode from the list.

[**0097**] In one embodiment, wherein the output mode is fixed to a first picture format, once the user selects an alternate output format from the list of retained output modes, the DHCT **16 (FIG. 3A)** continues to output the alternate output format indefinitely until the user once again selects another output mode (e.g., possibly the first picture format). In an alternate embodiment, when the user tunes to a different channel, the DHCT **16** discontinues outputting the alternate output format by reverting to output the first picture format.

V. Interactive Session Display Screens

[**0098**] **FIG. 5** is a block diagram of one arrangement for the TV set **341** and the DHCT **16**. The DHCT **16** includes a digital display **502** and navigation buttons **504** for performing navigational functions like channel changing, etc. For example, the user can select the navigation buttons **504** to select information in response to a DHCT prompted GUI screen **510** during phase I discovery. Presumably, a GUI screen **510** is presented because a connection between the DHCT port and corresponding connection at the TV set **341** has been made and a video format was input to the TV set input or inputs with which the TV set **341** is compatible. As shown, a text message in the display screen **510** queries the user, "Can you read this question?" The user will enter input if he or she is able to read the question. The display screen **510** suggests through the use of navigation arrow icons **512** that the user can select the navigation buttons **385** on the remote control device **380 (FIG. 3B)** or the DHCT navigation buttons **504**. One skilled in the art will understand that other buttons can be used to convey a user response, including the use of just the select button **387 (FIG. 3B)**.

[**0099**] As is shown in **FIGS. 6-7**, a set of display screens tailored for each combination of video format and display aspect ratio are generated for each respective video format during phase II discovery. Continuing with the example referenced in association with **FIG. 4**, within the generalized category of a respective scan mode (e.g., progressive versus interlaced), the picture is output in multiple ways to find out further capabilities of the TV set **341**. This process includes outputting different aspect ratios such as 16:9, 4:3, or others, as well as embedding a graphical picture within the picture (e.g., letterbox or sidebars). The user may have set the TV set **341** to display letterbox, for example, or there may be a default setting. The user may also configure settings in the DHCT **16** for handling the aspect ratio in a predetermined manner. Thus, there may be cumulative operations performed by the DHCT **16** and the TV set **341** that cause distortions of objects to be amplified (e.g., a ball on the screen may be stretched by operations in the DHCT **16** and then further stretched due to operations in the TV set **341**). Images stored in the storage device **373**, for example, may be presented at the TV set **341** in a distorted and non-distorted manner to determine these settings. The phase II discovery process also includes outputting graphics with alternate lines displaced or shifted by varied amounts to determine if the TV set **341** has a de-interlacer and if so, what is its quality. Graphical objects in the graphical picture may represent certain geometrical shapes subjected to any of a plurality of 2-D or 3-D transformations that include rotation, scaling, shear and perspectives, among others, that when coupled to alternate line displacements of shift that emulate motion from an interlaced camera, help identify the performance of the de-interlacing capabilities of a de-interlacer. For example, the DHCT **16** may test the quality of the de-interlacer of the TV set **341** to determine if de-interlacing functionality in the DHCT **16** should be bypassed due to superior quality of the de-interlacer in the TV set **341**. De-interlacer assessment may be further refined to determine which of two de-interlacers performs best for analog signals, for interlaced SD pictures received as compressed digital signals, and/or for interlaced HD pictures received as compressed digital signals. Note that a TV set may feature "multi-synch" support. For example, an HDTV set may support multiple video formats at its input. In such event, it may be desirable to drive the HDTV set with the native scan format of the sourced input signal to minimize picture degradation.

[**0100**] **FIG. 6** illustrates a query that is aimed towards determining how the TV set **341** handles certain aspect ratios. For example, a signal received from the headend **11 (FIG. 2)** may carry content at a 4:3 aspect ratio, although the connected TV set is an HDTV having a 16:9 aspect ratio. One way the HDTV set handles this source signal could be to provide black vertical stripe boxes on the side of the 4:3 screen. An interactive session can help the DHCT **16** determine what is connected by the way the TV set handles the displayed picture. As shown, the video format inferred here is handled by the TV set **341** by outlining the picture in the display screen with top and bottom block stripes. The display screen **610** includes a text message that asks the user, "Does the screen have top and bottom black boxes reducing the screen?" Depending on the response to this question, a series of screens can be presented that ask similar questions, such as whether the user sees side block stripes, or a boxed-in picture. In other embodiments, a single screen

instruction can ask all of these questions, which are aimed at trying to ascertain the aspect ratio of the TV set **341**.

[**0101**] **FIG. 7** is a block diagram illustrating another interactive display screen **710** used to fine tune the color quality. As shown, input is requested on the color of a graphical object (although it could be colored-text as well) in the display to ascertain the color temperature of the TV set display. For example, the graphical object, generated internally to the DHCT **16**, is a ball **712**, and the question presented to the user is, "what is the color of the ball in the screen?" A scrollable color-choice list **714** can be presented, which gives the user a choice of colors to choose from to enable the user to adequately describe the color of the ball.

[**0102**] Other questions can be presented to determine other characteristics. For example, input can be requested from the user on whether visible flicker or certain artifacts are visible to determine if the TV set has an internal line-doubler (i.e., de-interlacer) or to assess the quality of the line doubler versus that of the line doubler of the DHCT **16**. Additional questions can be presented to the user to provide user preferences on border color or shade (e.g., the letterbox may be available with different shades of gray to cause the picture brightness to vary and thus enhance the viewer experience).

[**0103**] Additional embodiments can be used for this interactive session between the user and the DHCT **16**. In one embodiment, synthesized audio can be played while cycling through the video formats, instructing the user to enter input without any dependence on a displayed GUI. In another embodiment, synthesized audio can be played with a displayed GUI in each cycled video format, and in some embodiments, synthesized audio is repeated if the user's input is not received after an elapsed time greater than a predetermined threshold.

[**0104**] Some embodiments may employ buttons on the DHCT **16** (e.g., light-emitting diodes, or LEDs, such as digital display **502** (**FIG. 5**)) in lieu of or in addition to the display screens. For example, since some HDTVs and projectors have common inputs that may not accept **1080***i* signals, the LEDs may be used where on-screen graphics is not readable (e.g., if the scan is not correct). Possible scan values include **1080***i*, **720***p*, **480***p*, and **480***i*. When NVM values are cleared during staging (e.g., initial installation), the scan value from a staging configuration file may be set. If the staging configuration file does not contain the scan value parameter, **1080***i* will be set. Most HDTVs will accept the **1080***i* scan format, so that may be the default value. Other settings may be available using a front panel settings key (not shown). For example, by holding down a settings key for a predetermined period of time, a message light may blink and the LED digits may reveal the current setting. In some embodiments, a scan barker (not shown) may be displayed. Pressing the settings key again may cycle the settings.

[**0105**] The display manager **335** can be implemented in hardware, software, firmware, or a combination thereof. In the preferred embodiment(s), the display manager **335** is implemented in software or firmware that is stored in a memory and that is executed by a suitable instruction execution system. If implemented in hardware, as in an alternative embodiment, the display manager **335** may be implemented with any or a combination of the following technologies, which are all well known in the art: a discrete logic circuit(s) having logic gates for implementing logic functions upon data signals, an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC) having appropriate combinational logic gates, a programmable gate array(s) (PGA), a field programmable gate array (FPGA), etc.

[**0106**] The display manager **335**, which comprises an ordered listing of executable instructions for implementing logical functions, can be embodied in any computer-readable medium for use by or in connection with an instruction execution system, apparatus, or device, such as a computer-based system, processor-containing system, or other system that can fetch the instructions from the instruction execution system, apparatus, or device and execute the instructions. In the context of this document, a "computer-readable medium" can be any means that can contain, store, communicate, propagate, or transport the program for use by or in connection with the instruction execution system, apparatus, or device. The computer readable medium can be, for example but not limited to, an electronic, magnetic, optical, electromagnetic, infrared, or semiconductor system, apparatus, device, or propagation medium. More specific examples (a nonexhaustive list) of the computer-readable medium would include the following: an electrical connection (electronic) having one or more wires, a portable computer diskette (magnetic), a random access memory (RAM) (electronic), a read-only memory (ROM) (electronic), an erasable programmable read-only memory (EPROM or Flash memory) (electronic), an optical fiber (optical), and a portable compact disc read-only memory (CDROM) (optical). Note that the computer-readable medium could even be paper or another suitable medium upon which the program is printed, as the program can be electronically captured, via for instance optical scanning of the paper or other medium, then compiled, interpreted or otherwise processed in a suitable manner if necessary, and then stored in a computer memory.

[**0107**] It should be emphasized that the above-described embodiments of the present disclosure, particularly, any "preferred embodiments" are merely possible examples of implementations, merely setting forth a clear understanding of the principles of the disclosures. Many variations and modifications may be made to the above-described embodiments of the disclosure without departing substantially from the spirit of the principles of the disclosure. All such modifications and variations are intended to be included herein within the scope of the disclosure and present disclosure and protected by the following claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for determining the characteristics of a display device coupled to a network client device capable of receiving TV signals, the network client device having video and audio output capabilities, said method comprising the steps of:

driving a display device with a first video output signal formatted according to a first video interface specification;

responsive to driving the display device, soliciting user input based on information included in the first video output signal;

determining a characteristic of the display device based on the user input; and

driving the display device according to the determined characteristic.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristic includes at least one of a type of display device, picture size, frame rate, scan format, color format, colorimetry, picture width-to-height aspect ratio, width-to-height aspect ratio of pixels, and capability and manner of receiving ancillary data.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the display device includes at least one of a television set and a display monitor.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of driving a display device with a first video output signal further includes the step of transmitting an audio output signal containing audible voice instructions to the user.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of driving a display device with a first video output signal includes the step of transmitting at least one of graphics data and video data.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of driving the display device according to the determined characteristic further includes the steps of receiving a TV signal at a network client device, processing the TV signal, and transmitting a video output signal according to the first video interface specification and according to at least one parameter of the TV signal.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the transmitted video output signal is delivered through a video port in the network client device, the video port preset according to the first video interface specification and according to at least one parameter of the TV signal.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of soliciting includes the step of presenting at least one of visible instructions and audible instructions to the user.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining includes the step of determining at least one of how to drive the display device such that a legible, non-distorted picture is presented and what are optimal signal parameters to send to the display device.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining includes the step of determining at least one of how to drive the display device such that a legible, distorted picture is presented and what are optimal signal parameters to send to the display device.

11. The method of claim 1, further including the step of driving the display device according to a second video format, wherein the step of driving the display device according to a second video format is at least one of a result of an automatic cycling after a defined threshold period of time of receiving no user input and a result of user input.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the step of driving the display device according to a second video format includes the step of driving the display device through an output port used to drive the display device according to the first video format.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the step of driving the display device according to a second video format includes the step of driving the display device through an output port different than the output port used to drive the display device according to the first video format.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the display device is physically connected to a network client device.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the display device is in wireless communication with a network client device.

16. The method of claim 1, further including the step of receiving a request for discovery of the characteristic.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the step of receiving a request includes the step of receiving a signal corresponding to the activation of a button on a remote control device.

18. The method of claim 1, further including the step of receiving a request for cycling through at least one of a different video format and a different output port.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the step of receiving a request includes the step of receiving a signal corresponding to the activation of a button on a remote control device.

20. The method of claim 1, further including the step of driving the display device according to at least one of the determined characteristic and a plurality of determined characteristics to present content on a display screen of the display device, wherein the step of driving the display device is further according to at least one parameter of a TV signal.

21. The method of claim 20, further including the step of receiving pictures from a storage device to process and present on the display screen of the display device.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the pictures include at least one of distorted objects, non-distorted objets, distorted images, non-distorted images, visual information, and a graphical characteristic to provide an indication of the characteristic of the display device.

23. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of determining a characteristic of the display device further includes the step of determining how a user has configured the display device to display a TV signal of a defined aspect ratio on the display device having at least one of the same physical aspect ratio and a different aspect ratio as the defined aspect ratio of the TV signal.

24. The method of claim 1, wherein the user input includes user preferences.

25. A method for determining the characteristics of a display device coupled to a network client device, said method comprising the steps of:

cycling through a plurality of video formats, each part of the cycle including a predetermined time duration;

outputting a video signal including pictures for each part of the cycle, wherein the pictures include at least one of graphics data and video data;

processing the pictures for each video format for output to a display device;

setting parameters of a video output port according to each video format;

soliciting a user response for each video format, wherein the step of soliciting includes the step of presenting at least one of visible instructions and audible instructions to the user;

determining at least one characteristic of the display device based on the user response, wherein the characteristic includes at least one of type of device, picture size, frame rate, scan format, color format, colorimetry, picture width-to-height aspect ratio, width-to-height aspect ratio of pixels, capability of providing ancillary data, manner of providing the ancillary data; and

driving the display device according to the at least one determined characteristic and according to at least one parameter of a received TV signal to present images on a display screen.

26. A system for determining the characteristics of a display device, said system comprising:

a memory with display logic; and

a processor configured with the display logic to drive a display device with a first video output signal formatted according to a first video interface specification, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to, responsive to driving the display device, solicit user input based on information included in the first video output signal, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to determine a characteristic of the display device based on the user input, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to drive the display device according to the determined characteristic.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein the characteristic includes at least one of a type of display device, picture size, frame rate, scan format, color format, colorimetry, picture width-to-height aspect ratio, width-to-height aspect ratio of pixels, and capability and manner of receiving ancillary data.

28. The system of claim 26, wherein the display device includes at least one of a television set and a display monitor.

29. The system of claim 26, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to effect the transmittal of an audio output signal containing audible voice instructions to the user.

30. The system of claim 26, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to effect the transmittal of at least one of graphics data and video data.

31. The system of claim 26, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to receive a TV signal from a network, process the TV signal, and effect the transmittal of a video output signal according to the first video interface specification and according to at least one parameter of the TV signal.

32. The system of claim 26, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to effect the transmittal of a video output signal through a video port, the video port preset according to the first video interface specification and according to at least one parameter of the TV signal.

33. The system of claim 26, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to solicit by effecting the presentation of at least one of visible instructions and audible instructions to the user.

34. The system of claim 26, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to determine at least one of how to drive the display device such that a legible, non-distorted picture is presented and what are optimal signal parameters to send to the display device.

35. The system of claim 34, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to determine at least one of how to drive the display device such that a legible, distorted picture is presented and what are optimal signal parameters to send to the display device.

36. The system of claim 34, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to effect driving the display device according to a second video format, the driving of the display device according to a second video format being at least one of a result of an automatic cycling after a defined threshold period of time of receiving no user input and a result of user input.

37. The system of claim 35, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to effect driving the display device through an output port used to drive the display device according to the first video format.

38. The system of claim 35, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to effect driving the display device through an output port different than the output port used to drive the display device according to the first video format.

39. The system of claim 26, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to effect communication with the display device through at least one of a wireless connection and a physical connection.

40. The system of claim 26, further including a remote control device configured with a button that, responsive to activation of the button, cooperates with the display logic to initiate discovery of characteristics of the device.

41. The system of claim 26, further including a remote control device configured with a button that, responsive to activation of the button, cooperates with the display logic to cycle through at least one of a plurality of formats and a plurality of video ports.

42. The system of claim 26, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to effect driving the display device according to at least one of the determined characteristic and a plurality of determined characteristics to present content on a display screen of the display device, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to effect driving of the display device according to at least one parameter of a TV signal.

43. The system of claim 42, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to receive pictures from a storage device, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic, and in cooperation with a media engine and output system, to process the pictures and present content resulting from the processing on a display screen of the display device.

44. The system of claim 43, wherein the pictures include at least one of distorted objects, non-distorted objets, distorted images, non-distorted images, visual information, and a graphical characteristic to provide an indication of the characteristic of the display device.

45. The system of claim 43, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic, and in cooperation with the media engine and the output system, to distort at least one of objects and video images and leave undistorted at least one of objects and video images

46. The system of claim 43, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic, and in cooperation with the media engine and the output system, to determine how a user has configured the display device to display a TV signal of a defined aspect ratio on the display device having at least one of the same physical aspect ratio and a different aspect ratio as the defined aspect ratio of the TV signal.

47. The system of claim 26, wherein the user input includes user preferences.

48. The system of claim 26, wherein the system is embodied in a network client device in communication with the display device.

49. A system for determining a preferred display performance between the de-interlacing ability of a display device coupled to a network client device and the de-interlacing ability of the network client device, said system comprising:

a memory with display logic; and

a processor configured with the display logic to present objects on a display screen of a display device that are altered by the display logic to solicit a response by a user, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to, responsive to the user input, determine the de-interlacing capability of the display device.

50. The system of claim 49, wherein the display device includes a television set.

51. The system of claim 49, wherein the processor is further configured with the display logic to determine the de-interlacing capability of the client device.

52. The method of claim 49, wherein the system is embodied in a network client device capable of outputting video and audio in at least one defined format through at least one port.

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